ILIFFE & SONS LTD. 20 TUDOR ST. LONDON

Contents for Collection 6

The Room in the Tower by E. F. Benson – January 1912
On Manoeuvres: A Flight on H. M. Aeroplane "Golden Eagle" by Donovan Bayley – April 1912
The Beloved of Amon-Ra by William Waldorf Astor – December 1912
The Great Day in 1920 by Captain S. W. Beeman – April 1913
The Mer-maiden by Dora Sigerson Shorter (poem) – August 1913
The Parliament of Santa Claus by Philip Gibbs (illustrations by Charles Robinson) – December 1913
My Daughter and Half the Kingdom: An Up-to-Date Fairy Tale in Ever So Many Chapters by Dion Clayton Calthrop – January 1914
The Two Towers by Herman Scheffauer – February 1914
The Morning of Time by Charles G. D. Roberts – March to August 1914
1. Tree Man and Cave Girl
2. The Bending of the Bow
3. The Destroying Splendour
4. The Terrors of the Dark
5. The Feasting of the Cave Folk
6. On the Face of the Waters
Coming of Age: Twenty-One Years of the Pall Mall Magazine by Albert Kinross – May 1914
The Mermaid by George A. Birmingham – May 1914

Addenda

The Confession of Rui the Priest by William Waldorf Astor – August 1894
Andromeda by Thomas Bailey Aldrich (poem) – August 1894
The Red Dwarf of Rabenstein by William Waldorf Astor – June 1895
Monsieur de Neron by William Waldorf Astor – August 1895
Balkameh by William Waldorf Astor – August 1901

The Room in the Tower

BY E. F. BENSON.

ILLUSTRATED BY

A. C. MICHAEL.

It is probable that everybody who is at all a constant dreamer has had at least one experience of an event or a sequence of circumstances which have come to his mind in sleep being subsequently realised in the material world. But, in my opinion, so far from this being a strange thing, it would be odder yet if this fulfilment did not occasionally happen, since our dreams are, as a rule, concerned with people whom we know and places with which we are familiar, such as might very naturally occur in the awake and daylit world. True, these dreams are often broken into by some absurd and fantastic incident which puts them out of court in regard to their subsequent fulfilment, but on the mere calculation of chances it does not appear in the least unlikely that a dream imagined by anyone who dreams constantly should occasionally come true. Not long ago, for instance, I experienced such a fulfilment of a dream which seems to me in no way remarkable, and to have no kind of psychical significance. The manner of it was as follows.

A CERTAIN friend of mine, living abroad, is amiable enough to write to me about once in a fortnight. Thus, when fourteen days or thereabouts have elapsed since I last heard from him, my mind, probably, either consciously or subconsciously, is expectant of a letter from him. One night last week I dreamed that as I was going upstairs to dress for dinner I heard, as I often heard, the sound of the postman's knock on my front door, and diverted my direction downstairs instead. There, among other correspondence, was a letter from him. Thereafter the

Copyright 1912 by E. F. Benson

fantastic entered, for on opening it I found inside the ace of diamonds, and scribbled across it in his well-known handwriting: "I am sending you this for safe custody, as you know it is running an unreasonable risk to keep aces in Italy." The next evening I was just preparing to go upstairs to dress when I heard the postman's knock, and did precisely as I had done in my dream. There, among other letters, was one from my friend. Only it did not contain the ace of diamonds. Had it done so, I should have attached more weight to the matter, which, as it stands, seems to me a perfectly ordinary coincidence. No doubt I consciously or sub-consciously expected a letter from him, and this suggested to me my dream. Similarly, the fact that my friend had not written to me for a fortnight suggested to him that he should do so. But occasionally it is not so easy to find such an explanation, and for the following story I can find no explanation at all. It came out of the dark, and into the dark it has gone again.

All my life I have been a habitual dreamer: the nights are few, that is to say, when I do not find on awakening in the morning that some mental experience has been mine, and sometimes all night long, apparently, a series of the most dazzling adventures befall me. Almost without exception these adventures are pleasant, though often merely trivial. It is of an exception that I am going to speak.

It was when I was about sixteen that a certain dream first came to me, and this is how it befell. It opened with my being set down at the door of a big red-brick house where, I understood, I was going to stay. The servant who opened the door told me that tea was going on in the garden, and led me through a low dark-panelled hall with a large open fireplace on to a cheerful green lawn set round with flower beds. There were grouped about the tea-table a small party of people, but they were all strangers to me except one, who was a school-fellow called Jack Stone, clearly the son of the house, and he introduced me to his mother and father and a couple of sisters. I was, I remember, somewhat astonished to find myself here, for the boy in question was scarcely known to me, and I rather disliked what I knew of him; moreover, he had left school nearly a year before. The afternoon was very hot, and an intolerable oppression reigned. On the far side of the lawn ran a red-brick wall, with an iron gate in its centre, outside which stood a walnut tree. We sat in the shadow of the house opposite a row of ball windows, inside which I could see a table with cloth laid, glimmering with glass and silver. This garden-front of the house was very long, and at one end of it stood a tower of three stories, which looked to me much older than the rest of the building.

Before long Mrs. Stone, who, like the rest of the party, had sat in absolute silence, said to me, "Jack will show you your room: I have given you the room in the tower."

Quite inexplicably my heart sank at her words. I felt as if I had known that I should have the room in the tower, and that it contained something dreadful and significant. Jack instantly got up, and I understood that I had to follow him. In silence we passed through the hall, and mounted a great oak staircase with many corners, and arrived at a small landing with two doors set in it. He pushed one of these open for me to enter, and, without coming in himself, closed it behind me. Then I knew that my conjecture had been right: there was something awful in the room, and, with the panic of nightmare growing swiftly and enveloping me, I awoke in a spasm of terror.

Now that dream, or variations on it, occurred to me intermittently for fifteen years. Most often it came in exactly this form, the arrival, the tea laid out on the lawn, the deadly silence succeeded by that one deadly sentence, the mounting with Jack Stone up to the room in the tower where horror dwelt, and it always came to a close in the nightmare of terror at that which was in the room, though I never saw what it was. At other times I experienced variations on this same

theme. Occasionally, for instance, we would be sitting at dinner in the dining-room into the windows of which I had looked on the first night when the dream of this house visited me; but wherever we were there was the same silence, the same sense of dreadful oppression and foreboding. And the silence I knew would always be broken by Mrs. Stone saying to me, "Jack will show you your room: I have given you the room in the tower." Upon which (this was invariable) I had to follow him up the oak-staircase with many corners, and enter the place that I dreaded more and more each time that I visited it in sleep. Or, again, I would find myself playing cards, still in silence, in a drawing-room lit with immense chandeliers that gave a blinding illumination. What the game was I have no idea, what I remember, with a sense of miserable anticipation, was that soon Mrs. Stone would get up and say to me, "Jack will show you your room: I have given you the room in the tower." This drawing-room where we played cards was next to the dining-room, and, as I have said, was always brilliantly illuminated, whereas the

"'Jack will show you your room: I have given you the room in the tower.'"

rest of the house was full of dusk and shadows. And yet how often, in spite of those bouquets of lights, have I not pored over the cards that were dealt me, scarcely able for some reason to see them. Their designs, too, were strange: there were no red suits, but all were black, and among them there were certain cards which were black all over. I hated and dreaded those.

As this dream continued to recur, I got to know the greater part of the house. There was a smoking-room beyond the drawing-room at the end of a passage with a green baize door. It was always very dark there, and as often as I went there I passed somebody whom I could not see in the doorway coming out. Curious developments, too, took place in the characters that peopled the dream as might happen to living people. Mrs. Stone, for instance, who, when I first saw her had been black-haired, became grey, and instead of rising briskly, as she had done at first when she said, "Jack will show you your room: I have given you the room in the tower," got up very feebly, as if the strength was leaving her limbs. Jack also grew up, and became a rather ill-looking young man with a brown moustache, while one of the sisters ceased to appear, and I understood she was married.

Then it so happened that I was not visited by this dream for six months or more, and I began to hope, in such inexplicable dread did I hold it, that it had passed away for good. But one night after this interval I again found myself being shown out on to the lawn for tea, and Mrs. Stone was not there; while the others were all dressed in black. At once I guessed the reason, and my heart leaped at the thought that perhaps this time I should not have to sleep in the room in the tower; and though we usually all sat in silence, on this occasion the sense of relief made me talk and laugh as I had never yet done. But even then matters were not altogether comfortable, for no one else spoke, but they all looked secretly at each other. And soon the foolish stream of my talk ran dry, and gradually an apprehension, worse than anything I had previously known, gained on me as the light slowly faded.

Suddenly a voice which I knew well broke the stillness, the voice of Mrs. Stone saying, "Jack will show you your room: I have given you the room in the tower." It seemed to come from near the gate in the red-brick wall that bounded the lawn, and, looking up, I saw that the grass there was sown thick with gravestones. A curious greyish light shone from them, and I could read the lettering on the grave nearest me, and it was "In evil memory of Julia Stone." Then, as usual, Jack got up and again I followed him through the hall and up the staircase with many corners. On this occasion it was darker than usual, and when I passed into the room in the tower I could only just see the furniture, the position of which was already familiar to me. Also there was a dreadful odour of decay in the room, and I woke screaming.

The dream, with such variations and developments as I have mentioned, went on at intervals for fifteen years. Sometimes I would dream it two or three nights in succession; once, as I have said, there was an intermission of six months, but taking a reasonable average I should say that I dreamed it quite as often as once in a month. It had, as is plain, something of nightmare about it, since it always ended in the same appalling terror, which, so far from getting less, seemed to me to gather fresh fear every time that I experienced it. There was, too, a strange and dreadful consistency about it. The characters in it, as I have mentioned, got regularly older; death and marriage visited this silent family, and I never in the dream, after Mrs. Stone had died, set eyes on her again. But it was always her voice that told me that the room in the tower was prepared for me, and whether we had tea out on the lawn, or the scene was laid in one of the rooms overlooking it, I could always see her gravestone standing just outside the iron gate. It was the same, too, with the married daughter: usually she was not present, but once or twice she returned again

in company with a man, whom I took to be her husband. He, too, like the rest of them, was always silent. But, owing to the constant repetition of the dream, I had ceased to attach, in my waking hours, any significance to it. I never met Jack Stone again during all those years, nor did I ever see a house that resembled this dark house of my dream. And then something happened.

I had been in London in this year up till the end of July, and during the first week in August went down to stay with a friend in a house he had taken for the summer months in the Ashdown Forest district of Sussex. I left London early, for John Clinton was to meet me at Forest Row station, and we were going to spend the day golfing and go to his house in the evening. He had his motor with him, and we set off, about five of the afternoon, after a thoroughly delightful day, for the drive, the distance being some ten miles. As it was still so early we did not have tea at the club house, but waited till we should get home. As we drove, the weather, which up till then had been, though hot, deliciously fresh, seemed to me to alter in quality, and become very stagnant and oppressive, and I felt that indefinable sense of ominous apprehension that I am accustomed to before thunder. John, however, did not share my views, attributing my loss of lightness to the fact that I had lost both my matches. Events proved, however, that I was right, though I do not think that the thunderstorm that broke that night was the sole cause of my depression.

"I had to follow him up a great oak stair case with many corners"

Our way lay through deep high-banked lanes, and before we had gone very far I fell asleep, and was only awakened by the stopping of the motor. And with a sudden thrill, partly of fear, but chiefly of curiosity, I found myself standing in the doorway of my house of dream. We went, I half-wondering whether or not I was dreaming still, through a low oak-panelled hall and out on to the lawn, where tea was laid in the shadow of the house. It was set in flower-beds, a red-brick wall with a gate in it bounded one side, and out

beyond that was a space of rough grass with a walnut tree. The façade of the house was very long, and at one end stood a three-storied tower, markedly older than the rest.

Here for the moment all resemblance to the repeated dream ceased. There was no silent and somehow terrible family, but a large assembly of exceedingly cheerful persons, all of whom were known to me. And in spite of the horror with which the dream itself had always filled me, I felt nothing of it now that the scene was thus reproduced before me. But I felt the intensest curiosity as to what was going to happen.

Tea pursued its cheerful course, and before long Mrs. Clinton got up. And at that moment I think I knew what she was going to say. She spoke to me, and what she said was:

"Jack will show you your room. I have given you the room in the tower."

At that for half a second the horror of the dream took hold of me again. But it quickly passed, and again I felt nothing more than the most intense curiosity. It was not very long before it was amply satisfied.

John turned to me.

"Right up at the top of the house," he said, "but I think you'll be comfortable. We're absolutely full up. Would you like to go and see it now? By Jove, I believe that you are right, and that we are going to have a thunderstorm. How dark it has become."

I got up and followed him. We passed through the hall, and up the perfectly familiar staircase. Then he opened the door, and I went in. And at that moment sheer unreasoning terror again possessed me. I did not know for certain what I feared—I simply feared. Then, like a sudden recollection when one remembers a name which has long escaped the memory, I knew what I feared. I feared Mrs. Stone, whose grave, with the sinister inscription, "In evil memory," I had so often seen in my dream just beyond the lawn which lay below my window. And then once more the fear passed, so completely that I wondered what there was to fear, and I found myself sober and quiet and sane in the room in the tower, the name of which I had so often heard in my dream, and the scene of which was so familiar.

I looked round it with a certain sense of proprietorship, and found that nothing had been changed from the dreaming nights in which I knew it so well. Just to the left of the door was the bed, lengthways along the wall, with the head of it in the angle. In a line with it was the fireplace and a small bookcase, opposite the door the outer wall was pierced by two lattice-paned windows between which stood the dressing table, while ranged along the fourth wall was the washing-stand and a big cupboard. My luggage had already been unpacked, for the furniture of dressing and undressing lay orderly on the washstand and toilet table, while my dinner clothes were spread out on the coverlet of the bed. And then, with a sudden start of inexplicable dismay, I saw that there were two rather conspicuous objects which I had not seen before in my dreams: one, a life-sized oil painting of Mrs. Stone; the other, a black and white sketch of Jack Stone, representing him as he had appeared to me only a week before in the last of the series of these repeated dreams—a rather secret and evil-looking man of about thirty. His picture hung between the windows, looking straight across the room to the other portrait which hung at the side of the bed. At that I looked next, and as I looked I felt once more the horror of nightmare seize me.

It represented Mrs. Stone as I had seen her last in my dreams—old and withered and white-haired. But in spite of the evident feebleness of body a dreadful exuberance and vitality shone through the frail envelope of flesh, an exuberance wholly malign, a vitality that foamed and frothed with unimaginable evil. Evil beamed from the narrow leering eyes, it laughed in the demon-like mouth. The whole face was instinct with some secret and appalling mirth: the hands clasped together on the knee seemed shaking

with suppressed and nameless glee. Then I saw also that it was signed in the left-hand bottom corner, and, wondering who the artist could be, I looked more closely, and read the inscription: "Julia Stone, by Julia Stone."

There came a tap at the door, and John Clinton entered.

"Got everything you want?" he asked.

"I've cut myself somehow, said I. John gave a little startled exclamation 'Why, I have too,' he said."

"Rather more than I want," said I, pointing to the picture.

He laughed.

"Hard-featured old lady," he said. "By herself, too, I remember. Anyhow, she can't have flattered herself much."

"But don't you see?" said I. "It's scarcely a human face at all. It's the face of some witch, of some devil."

He looked at it more closely.

"Yes; it isn't very pleasant," he said. "Scarcely a bedside manner, eh? Yes; I can imagine getting the nightmare if I went to sleep with that close by my bed. I'll have it taken down if you like."

"I really wish you would," I said.

He rang the bell, and with the help of a servant we detached the picture and carried it out on to the landing, and put it with its face to the wall.

"By Jove, the old lady is a weight," said John mopping his forehead. "I wonder if she had something on her mind."

The extraordinary weight of the picture had struck me, too. I was about to reply when I caught sight of my own hand. There was blood on it, in considerable quantities, covering the whole palm.

"I've cut myself somehow," said I.

John gave a little startled exclamation.

"Why, I have, too," he said.

Simultaneously the footman took out his handkerchief and wiped his hand with it. I saw that there was blood also on his handkerchief.

John and I went back into the tower room and washed the blood off. But neither on his hand nor on mine was there the slightest trace of a scratch or cut. It seemed to me that having ascertained this, we both, by a sort of tacit consent, did not allude to it again. Something in my case, had dimly occurred to me that I did not wish to think about. It was but a conjecture, but I fancied that I knew the same thing had occurred to him.

The heat and oppression of the air, for the storm we had expected was still undischarged, increased very much after dinner, and for some time most of the party, among whom was John Clinton and myself, sat outside on the path bounding the lawn where we had had tea. The night was absolutely dark, and no twinkle of star or moon-ray could penetrate the pall of cloud that overset the sky. By degrees our assembly thinned—the women went up to bed, men dispersed to the smoking or billiard room, and not long after eleven my host and I were the only two left. All the evening I thought that he had something on his mind, and as soon as we were alone he spoke.

"The man who helped us with the picture had blood on his hand, too, did you notice?" he said. "I asked him just now if he had cut himself, and he said he supposed he had, but that he could find no mark of it. Now where did that blood come from?"

By dint of telling myself that I was not going to think about it, I had succeeded in not doing so, and I did not want, especially just at bedtime, to be reminded of it.

"I don't know," said I, "and I don't really care, so long as the picture of Mrs. Julia Stone is not by my bed."

He got up.

"But it's odd," he said. "Ha! Now you'll see another odd thing."

A dog of his, an Irish terrier by breed, had come out of the house as we talked. The door behind us into the hall was open, and a bright oblong of light shone across the lawn to the iron gate which led on to the rough grass outside where the walnut-tree stood. I saw that the dog had all his hackles up, bristling with rage and fright; his lips were curled back from his teeth as if he was ready to spring at something, and he was growling to himself. He took not the slightest notice of his master or me, but stiffly and tensely walked across the grass to the iron gate. There he stood for a moment, looking through the bars and still growling. Then of a sudden his courage seemed to desert him; he gave one long howl, and scuttled back to the house with a curious crouching sort of movement.

"He does that half-a-dozen times a day," said John. "He sees something which he both hates and fears."

I walked to the gate and looked over it. Something was moving on

the grass outside, and soon a sound which I could not instantly identify came to my ears. Then I remembered what it was; it was the purring of a cat. I lit a match and saw the purrer, a big blue Persian, walking round and round in a little circle just outside the gate, stepping high and ecstatically, with tail carried aloft like a banner there. But that's not the end of the dog mystery, for Toby and he are the best of friends, but the beginning of the cat mystery. What's the cat doing there? And why is Darius pleased, while Toby is terror-stricken?"

At that moment I remembered the rather horrible detail of my dreams when I saw through the gate, just where

"But in that flash I saw another thing also—namely, a figure that leaned over the end of my bed, watching me."

Its eyes were bright and shining and every now and then it put its head down and sniffed at the grass.

I laughed.

"The end of that mystery, I am afraid," I said. "Here's a large cat having Walpurgis night all alone."

"Yes, that's Darius," said John. He spends half the day and all night

the cat was now, the white tombstone with the sinister inscription. But before I could answer the rain began, as suddenly and heavily as if a tap had been turned on, and simultaneously the big cat squeezed through the bars of the gate, and came leaping across the lawn to the house for shelter. Then it sat in the doorway, looking out eagerly

into the dark. It spat and struck at John with its paw, as he pushed it in, in order to close the door.

Somehow, with the portrait of Julia Stone in the passage outside, the room in the tower had absolutely no alarm for me, and as I went to bed, feeling very sleepy and heavy, I had nothing more than interest for the curious incident about our bleeding hands, and the conduct of the cat and dog. The last thing I looked at before I put out my light was the square empty space by my bed, where the portrait had been. Here the paper was of its original full tint of dark red; over the rest of the walls it had faded. Then I blew out my candle and instantly fell asleep.

My awaking was equally instantaneous, and I sat bolt upright in bed, under the impression that some bright light had been flashed in my face, though it was now absolutely pitch dark. I knew exactly where I was, in the room which I had dreaded in dreams, but no horror that I ever felt when asleep approached the fear that now invaded and froze my brain. Immediately after, a peal of thunder crackled just above the house, but the probability that it was only a flash of lightning which awoke me gave no reassurance to my galloping heart. Something, I knew was in the room with me, and instinctively I put out my right hand which was nearest the wall to keep it away. And my hand touched the edge of a picture frame hanging close to me.

I sprang out of bed, upsetting the small table that stood by it, and I heard my watch, candle, and matches clatter on to the floor. But for the moment there was no need of light, for a blinding flash leaped out of the clouds, and showed me that by my bed again hung the picture of Mrs. Stone. And instantly the room went into blackness again. But in that flash I saw another thing also—namely, a figure that leaned over the end of my bed, watching me. It was dressed in some close-clinging white garment, spotted and stained with mould, and the face was that of the portrait.

Overhead the thunder cracked and roared, and when it ceased and the deathly stillness succeeded, I heard the rustle of movement coming nearer me, and, more horrible yet, perceived an odour of corruption and decay. And then a hand was laid on the side of my neck, and close beside my ear I heard quick-taken eager breathing. Yet I knew that this thing, though it could be perceived by touch, by smell, by eye, and by ear, was still not of this earth, but something that had passed out of the body and had power to make itself manifest. Then a voice, already familiar to me, spoke.

"I knew you would come to the room in the tower," it said. "I have been long waiting for you. At last you have come. To-night I shall feast; before long we will feast together."

And the quick breathing came closer to me, I could feel it on my neck.

At that the terror, which I think had paralysed me for the moment, gave way to the wild instinct of self-preservation. I hit wildly with both arms, kicking out at the same moment, and heard a little animal-like squeal, and something soft dropped with a thud beside me. I took a couple of steps forward, nearly tripping up over whatever it was that lay there, and by the merest good luck found the handle of the door. In another second I ran out on the landing, and had banged the door behind me. Almost at the same moment I heard a door open somewhere below, and John Clinton, candle in hand, came running upstairs.

"What is it?" he said. "I sleep just below you, and heard a noise, as if—Good heavens, there's blood on your shoulder."

I stood there, so he told me afterwards, swaying from side to side, white as a sheet, with the mark on my shoulder as if a hand covered with blood had been laid there.

"It's in there," I said pointing. "She—you know. The portrait is in there, too, hanging up on the place we took it from."

At that he laughed.

"My dear fellow, this is mere nightmare," he said.

He pushed by me and opened the door, I standing there simply inert

with terror, unable to stop him, unable to move.

"Pbew! What an awful smell," he said.

Then there was silence; he had passed out of my sight behind the open door. Next moment he came out again, as white as myself, and instantly shut it.

"Yes, the portrait's there," he said, "and on the floor is a thing—a thing spotted with earth, like what they bury people in. Come away, quick, come away."

How I got downstairs I hardly know. An awful shuddering and nausea of the spirit rather than of the flesh had seized me, and more than once he had to place my feet upon the steps, while every now and then he cast glances of terror and apprehension up the stairs. But in time we came to his dressing-room on the floor below, and there I told him what I have here described.

. . . . . .

The sequel can be made short, indeed some of my readers have perhaps already guessed what it was, if they remember that inexplicable affair of the churchyard at West Fawley some eight years ago, where an attempt was made three times to bury the body of a certain woman who had committed suicide. On each occasion the coffin was found in the course of a few days again protruding from the ground. After the third attempt, in order that the thing should not be talked about, the body was buried elsewhere in unconsecrated ground. Where it was buried was just outside the iron gate of the garden belonging to the house where this woman had lived. She had committed suicide in a room at the top of the tower in that house. Her name was Julia Stone.

Subsequently the body was again secretly dug up, and the coffin was found to be full of blood.

TURN YOUR MONEY.

WHENEVER the sweet young Moon you see
Be sure that you turn your money;
If it's sou or sovereign or "bit bawbee"
She'll double it all in a month, will she.
(She's never doubled it yet for me
Though I always turn my money.)

Then why, oh why (you will say to me),
Why still do you turn your money?
The sweet young Moon is a woman, you see,
So she changes her mind continually,
And perhaps she may yet remember me
If I always turn my money.

ERNEST BLAKE.

ON MANOEUVRES.

A Flight on H.M. Aeroplane "Golden Eagle."

BY DONOVAN BAYLEY.

I.

WITH trepidation in his heart, but keen expectation in his mind, Walford Mortain, war correspondent, fallen upon unprofitable times of peace, plodded in the dead of night alone up the steep, flinty road that leads to the top of Beachy Head.

Also his back ached, and his arms were stiff and sore. He was carrying a kit-bag weighing not less than forty pounds, and he was unused to such labour.

The nervous expectation was caused by the fact that as soon as he reached the end of his walk through the dark he would be taken aboard H.M. aeroplane Golden Eagle, the fastest thing that ever flew. He was accustomed to mailplanes and passengerplanes, which are comparatively docile, but he was not one of the very few civilians who had been allowed to board a warplane. He recalled having seen the Golden Eagle in flight one grey day when he was crossing the North Atlantic in one of the crack airliners. She was doing well in the teeth of dirty weather and gusty winds, and he was on deck. A fellow-passenger seized him by the arm, and suddenly swung him round to see the warplane coming along. She was blue-grey, without one scrap of bright metal-work to reflect the light or make her look conspicuous. Her long, slender planes stretched rigidly above her slim, armour-plated body. She flew a mile above his head, and he could only just see the men on her bridge, but she passed the liner with a thunderous roar, as an express train sweeps by a local train.

Now, pledged to strict secrecy, he was about to go aboard the very craft that had thrilled him so when she swept in her strength and speed over the liner, the vessel he had thought so swift till that swifter thing had come up from the horizon, had passed over, and had slid down the firmament to the horizon again. She had seemed to him the materialisation of all that is meant by the word ruthless. Fleet and sleek and thunderous, she had driven across stormy sky, a thing skilfully made to bring annihilation to her like or to meet it from her like. No mercy went to the building of her, and there would be none at the ending of her, none all her days. She was the winged terror that threatened man from the heavens—Jupiter come again into power to hurl thunderbolts, the negation of the Christ, the proof that the cruel gods of old are potent yet. Out of his brain man made them when man was in the making. They may unmake man before all is finished.

As Mortain climbed the hill he quivered with the sense of adventure, felt oppressed by the nature of the thing in which he was to trust himself. War on the waters and on the land was such an accepted thing that it hardly stirred him, but war on the winds, and war so blasting, chilled even him.

He found the warplane on the summit of the bluff headland, with her prow pointing out over the waters of the narrow channel that once was

England's surest defence. There was not a light aboard her, and scarcely a sound. She was laired in the darkness, waiting to slip out secretly on her menacing errand, and the men who drove her fell in with her mood, seemed to plot evil with her. Affronting the eternal stars was the long black silhouette of a 4.7-inch gun, mounted so that it could be trained either upon another warplane, or turned down so that it might send its shell smashing through a man-o'-war from deck to keel, or, with devil's luck, into the engine-room itself.

"Halt! Who goes there?" rang a challenge. Mortain stopped dead.

"Friend!" he answered.

"Is that you, Mortain, old chap?"

"Yes, it's me. That you, Bradshaw?"

"You've guessed it. Come along; we're waiting for you." He walked to the side of the warplane, shook hands with Bradshaw, and looked up at her. Forty feet above the wheels of her carriage was the underside of her body.

"I can't promise you the comforts of a liner," Lieutenant Bradshaw said, "but you'll have the time of your life, all the same."

Bradshaw is one of those men who would be optimistic on a stray iceberg in the Bight of Benin, and, knowing this, Mortain said nothing, but handed his bag in silence to a hatchet-faced man who seemed to be a mixture of an A.B. and a motor-omnibus chauffeur.

"Can't take all this luggage aboard, sir," he said, after weighing it in his hand. "It's an Admiral's allowance of kit. Very sorry, sir; but if it came aboard it'd only be heaved over the side when the captain found it."

"Quite true," said Bradshaw, grinning unsympathetically. "Naked you came into this world, and almost jolly well naked as regards toilet and fashion fakements do you go a-sailing in a warplane manœuvre times. Get out your pyjamas, your toothbrush, a couple of flannel shirts, and, if you've brought one, a sweater, and send all the superfluities home to your feminine belongings. And hurry up, or you'll be left on the land. We're off at once."

"How long shall we be away?" Mortain asked.

"I don't know, sonnie-boy. Maybe a week, maybe a day, maybe till the crack o' doom.

"Have I got to last till the crack of doom on a suit of pyjamas, a toothbrush, and a sweater?"

"Yes, my bonnie lad, you have, indeed, if you come. Don't argue, or you'll lose your passage."

"In order to revel in the latest damnation designs of science I must revert to primitive barbarism?"

"In very truth, pilgrim. The way you journalists put things tidily in a nutshell is a source of constant admiration to me. Make up your voluminous mind, and either come aboard now without your wardrobe, your dress-suit, and your glad-rags, or go home."

Mortain looked round. There was none in sight excepting Bradshaw and the man. Beachy Head seemed to be back in the primæval æons, and the night was dark, with the threat of rain in the sky.

"If you're looking for the luggage-in-advance varlet," said Bradshaw complacently, "you won't find him. This is not one of his haunts. Choose, my merry man, my old friend, between leaving your poor luggage all alone in the cold or staying with it."

Bradshaw had got permission for Mortain to go out on the Golden Eagle during the manœuvres, a privilege sufficiently rare to make it certain that half-a-dozen newspapers would want his story of it. Therefore, he badly wanted to go. On the other hand, there was a bright new dressing-case in his bag, and it had silver fitments, and had recently been given him by one Mary, whom he was going to marry, and although he knew that he could conceal its loss until that took place, he knew he could not after.

Not only that, he felt that if a reasonable excuse offered itself, he would not be sorry. The sky over the sea looked to him to be too mysterious a place to ride through at dead of night.

"Well, good-bye," said Bradshaw, putting his foot on the accommodation ladder. Mortain looked aloft at the

Titanic aeroplane, and she lured him. He snapped the lock of his bag, left it there on the top of Beachy Head, and followed Bradshaw.

The Golden Eagle was blue-grey, and her lines were those of a pot-bellied dragon fly, with exaggerated wings. Round her turbine engines she was armoured, and her one 4-7in. gun thrust its long snout from a chilled steel casemate. Her carriage, which from the ground seemed more like odd scaffolding, held her body forty feet aloft, and was braced with steel tubing. Among its intricacies were little platforms to which bamboo ladders led for the crew to move about on when they wanted to watch the ground immediately below, or drop explosives.

Her propellers, numbering many thousands, were not visible, but revolved in two steel tunnels which ran through her body from bow to stern. They were, in fact, on the same principle as the turbines of a steamship, but with the opposite effect, for, instead of being driven round by steam, they drove the air round.

Mortain climbed up the accommodation ladder after Bradshaw. He was hampered by his sweater, his pyjamas, and his flannel shirts. After him came the hatchet-faced man. Suddenly a crackling noise began, which swelled to a growl, and mounted to a shrill droning. The warplane lurched as she ran over the grass, and a strong wind blew past the three climbing men. Then the lurching stopped, though the wind grew stronger, and for one cold moment Mortain, looking over his shoulder, saw the seaward face of Beachy Head flying back from him with amazing speed.

II.

The gale of her passage sang amongst the slender steelwork of her carriage, and far below, sinking swiftly, the black sea was streaked with dimly gleaming phosphorescence, while Mortain longed to be a baby safe again in his mother's arms. Above him, calm, matter-of-fact, Bradshaw climbed the swaying ladder till he reached a trap-door, pushed it up, and went into the cavernous blackness of the Golden Eagle's body, Mortain following tremulously, to find himself on a dark, quivering deck, roofed by the curved upper deck, and shut in by the armoured sides of the warplane. To port and starboard of him, covered in by wooden casing, the top of which made shelves three feet wide, ran the tunnels in which the propellers worked, and filled the place with the noise of rushing winds. Lying on the shelves, which were covered with hard, leather cushions, were a number of the airmen. Every now and then the light from a cigarette would reveal a face for a moment. The vibration was intense. The air seemed to shudder in the dark.

"This is the place where the lower deck ratings live," Bradshaw said, leading the way to another ladder, which ran to the outer deck, to which he climbed. A rope running along its centre was the only protection for those who walked it, and this Mortain grasped as if he were drowning. On each side there was nothing but the troubled wind between him and the sea. A few feet in front of him the planes ran down to the body, and at an equal distance forward of that the upraised bridge made a little protection against the wind. Lying in the oasis of calm behind it were half a dozen men smoking. Bradshaw stepped over them, and walked round the narrow, railless gangway which led by the bridge. Below him, nothing intervening, was the sea muttering strange things to the night. Mortain, grasping the slender steel uprights supporting the bridge, trod in his steps. There was not room on the gangway for a man's feet side by side.

"Isn't this very dangerous?" he shouted, above the gale.

"No. So long as you hold on to the ironwork at your side you're all right," Bradshaw yelled back, cheerily.

The gangway led round to another ladder, down which they clambered to the quarter-deck, Mortain dizzy, and sweating coldly.

"Come into the wardroom," Brad-

shaw said, "and I'll introduce you to the others."

He knelt on the deck, and opened a hatch disclosing a hole very like a pavement coal-shoot, and dropped his legs down it. There was no taffrail anywhere, the metal deck curved, and the sea was a mile below, and seemed to be sunk in a bottomless void of reeling winds, with Mortain's heart. He lay on the deck and looked at the stars, which appeared to be speeding parallel with the warplane's flight, and he felt that he had left the world for ever, to be whirled eternally through a sunless immensity towards an infinitely remote constellation. In his ears was the throbbing of mighty machinery, and a storm of cold wind, like an ethereal torrent in fierce spate, plucked at him as it raved by. Phrases shaped themselves in his brain. "I am like a little soul bound to the beating pinions of death," he said. Bradshaw reached out an arm from the hatchway, and clasped his wrist.

"Come down where it's warm," he said. Mortain got to his knees, crawled to the edge of the hole, slid into it, felt for the ladder with his feet, missed it, and fell through. The distance from deck to deck was but six feet six, but he thought he was falling leagues.

"Descendeth one from on high," said Bradshaw. "He'll learn better when he's been aboard longer. I apologise for him."

Inside the wardroom it was quite possible to hear what was said, though the droning and the humming of the warplane were still loud. Like the men's quarters, it was dark. At one end, revealed by the lights of their cigarettes, were three officers.

"This," said Bradshaw, "is my friend Mortain, who, ignorant of what is good for him, and wotting not when he was well off, prevailed upon me to prevail upon the Powers-That-Be to let him come with us for a cruise in this thing they describe in the Navy List as a ship. Do you give him the glad right hand?"

"We give him the glad right hand for your sake, Braddy, and we commiserate with him for his own. He'll be airsick, very airsick," said one of them.

"That voice, Mortain, belongs to Ingram, who is said to know how to make the wheels go round. The cigarette that glows to the right of him is in the mouth of Bird, who assists in navigating us. He is a long, red-haired man. The other cigarette is all that can be revealed of O'Flynn, who lets off the squibs."

"He will be very sick," repeated Ingram, the engineer-lieutenant, doggedly. "The first time I went out in one of these infernal old barges I was immoderately sick."

"I've crossed the North Atlantic by mailplane many times, and I've never been sick," Mortain protested.

"That, my innocent, was mere joy-riding," Bradshaw told him pleasantly. "Come up on deck, and I'll show you things."

He went up the ladder again into a wind that tore at one, and seemed to Mortain to be expressly intended to wrench him from the warplane and spin him down into the whimpering sea. Bradshaw led the way to the bridge.

"Go up in front of me," he said. "I'll follow to see you're not blown down."

At the top of the ladder a hand stretched out from above and grasped Mortain by the collar of his coat.

"You the passenger?" asked the man behind the hand.

"He is," said Bradshaw. "It was a whim of his to come."

"Where are we going?" Mortain asked after a little.

"Haven't had orders yet," said McKenzie, the captain, "but for the time being we're going out down over the Channel with all lights out. It's a fine sight, isn't it?" and he pointed to space generally.

"McKenzie is a poet," said Bradshaw, "even if he is the 'owner' of this warplane, and a hired assassin who turns the pellucid firmament into a shambles, as the latest people's pet called us in Parliament the other day."

III.

Mortain, from the security of the shielded bridge, looked down, and saw far below the lights of a steamer like moving gems on a bed of shimmering

black satin. High above, but behind, the edges of the planes cut through the chill air like the rigid wings of a hovering seamew. Every moment the sea sank further, the wind more icy, while breathing became yet more difficult. Black clouds flitted across the sky like things shrouded in ebon winding sheets.

Once a minute a tiny green electric lamp lit up in a lidless box on the bridge, the signal that the look-out was untiring.

"It's going to be a dirty night," Bradshaw said.

"Yes," McKenzie answered. "We'll be up above it, though. We have to fly on the levels where no merchantman rises, but for compensation we fly above the rain. It'll be pouring down here soon."

"Why do you go so high?"

"Because we're a danger to everything with wings. There's nothing in the air, except the lightning, that can overtake us, and therefore we have to get out of everybody's way, till we want to get in somebody's way. When that day comes we shall go through like a fire engine in Cheapside."

"Look there!" Bradshaw said. He pointed across the sea. Far away, her decks bright with lamps, and her long, slim sides pierced with blazing portholes, the East-bound liner was flying for harbour. She looked like a mammoth fire-fly, and she sang like a bee.

"She's the Herlihy and Cummings liner Bird of Paradise, Philadelphia—Sydenham," Bradshaw said. "She comes across in thirty-six hours, and she's never late."

"But that's not fast," Mortain objected. "The mailplanes do it in twenty-four in all weathers."

"Yes, but they don't carry safety gadgets. They won't float if they fall in the sea, they carry no boats, and seldom a dozen people besides their crews. That thing's got five hundred souls aboard for a certainty. And if you're extolling mailplanes, what about this little Imperial Packet you're in now? She wins her genial way to the Amurrican seaboard in nineteen hours, and never gets a hot bearing. She's a daisy. She's I—T IT."

"She's the last thing in miracles," Mortain admitted. "How do you do it?"

"Our engines drink fuel by the keg where the others only lap it by the gallon. They're running to make a profit, to earn dividends; we're running on the united finances of the British Empire to keep the air, and carry war to the little old island's enemies, and serve it up to 'em hot. That's how."

"Hold tight!" said McKenzie. He pressed buttons, and the great warplane skimmed round on a long slant, while the deck under foot seemed to be leaving the men on it to float in space.

"As a little tactical exercise, purely for our own benefit, we're going to 'capture' that liner," Bradshaw explained.

"Doesn't she see us?"

"No. It'll set her nerves on edge when she does."

"What's going to happen?"

"Watch. And while you're watching, remember our 4.7in. gun."

The liner came on, looking like a city celebrating at night; the warplane, ghostly and dim, rushed at her as sudden doom flings itself at kings. She was spanking along from Queenstown, and she expected to drop at Dover well within the hour with the Irish parcel post, and for the Customs examination. She had already passed the great green beam of light that towers to heaven when the night falls on Land's End. Then, roaring, she swept under the warplane, which swung round, slanting like a wind-blown gull, and Mortain was flung up against Bradshaw as the Golden Eagle came round to swoop on her prey.

The threatened rain began to fall in sheets. McKenzie moved the engine-room telegraph to full speed, the warplane slid down with a rush, and descended ahead of the liner's bows as though she were stationary. As they swept past, Mortain, for a breathless instant, could see the passengers gazing dismayed at the man-o'-war. He turned and watched her. In two minutes she was a point of light on the horizon. In five she was clear out of sight behind the curve of the world.

"We could have knocked her end-

ways as we went by her," Bradshaw said. "We were just pretending she was a troopship."

The Golden Eagle's bows were ambitiously pointed to the stars.

"It's us for the upper air and the open sea," McKenzie said. "You'd better turn in, Mr. Mortain. We shan't have anything more to show you to-night, except the constellations above and the cloud banks below."

Mortain yawned. The strong wind had made him drunken with sleep. "Have you had your orders yet?" he asked.

"Yes. I've to go five hours out into the North Atlantic, and pick up Quebec by wireless for further instructions."

"I'll turn in, then, at once for a few hours," Mortain said. "You won't let me miss anything, will you?"

"No. You shall be called if anything worth seeing comes along."

Mortain followed Bradshaw back to the ward-room, and was sound asleep within ten minutes in another man's bunk, lulled by the swing and sway of the great warplane as she flew on through the night over the wide Atlantic.

At four in the morning Bradshaw came down from the bridge and shook him by the shoulder.

"Show a leg!" he said. "Show a leg. There's something going to happen you won't want to miss."

Mortain rolled out of his borrowed bunk, dressed fumblingly in the half-light, and climbed out of the deserted cabin, to find dense fog. Bradshaw was not in sight, but the crew was at quarters, though the mist hid all but two men. They were dressed in oil-skins, with rubber sea-boots, and they slapped their hands across their chests to warm their fingers.

"What is happening?" he asked one of them.

"Don't know, sir, rightly. We're flopping about through the clouds just now, but why, and what's below, I can't tell you."

IV.

In another five minutes the Golden Eagle drove up into clear weather. The rising sun turned the fleecy white vapour under them to rosy pink, and the air seemed thin and cold, but life-giving. Looking along the deck, Mortain saw the men at their stations, and all of them who could were peering down at the upper surface of the cloud bank, as though striving to look through it to see what was hidden from sight on the waters below.

O'Flynn tapped him on the shoulder, and beckoned him to follow. He went cautiously after him along the vibrating deck, and wished from the bottom of his soul that he had the courage to go down on his hands and knees in face of that unmoved crew and crawl. O'Flynn led the way round the narrow gangway Bradshaw had taken him across the night before. In the middle of it he looked down, and saw through a break in the clouds a momentary glimpse of the grey sea tossing remotely below his feet. He clung with both hands to the supports of the bridge, while the vibration seemed to be shaking his hold from the steel tubing. He was cowed. Then, with a run, he gained the after-deck, which, in spite of the raised bridge forward of it, seemed to be the pathway of all the gales of heaven. Looking back, he saw the shadow of the warplane scurrying over the opaque surface of the clouds below, while above, like scattered swansdown, a higher layer of clouds sped over a sky of delicate azure.

With O'Flynn he went down into the men's quarters, walked once again between the propeller tunnels, and descended by crazy bamboo ladders to a little platform lashed to struts and stays of the carriage below the warplane's body. The wind seemed to be a solid thing that enveloped him, choked him, and incessantly thrust at him. He lay on his stomach on the platform beside O'Flynn, and regarded the immensity below. From horizon to horizon, like the snow-mantled Alps, the peaks of the clouds stretched. But unlike the good, solid mountains, he knew, these writhed and altered moment by moment, weird and uncanny, a vast nightmare terrain. Climbing unconcernedly about the ladders were the men whose duties lay

in that part of the warplane. In all the unimaginable vastness of the firmament he and they were the only living beings in sight, and the realisation of it smote him like a sword, and he trembled.

"I'm having spasms in my soul," he shouted in O'Flynn's ear. "This is awful beyond everything"—he pointed down—"and as beautiful as the heart of love."

"You'll get used to it," O'Flynn assured him. "It made me write poetry with blue ink on pink paper at first." Then he began to explain the manœuvres, and the part they were taking in them, to him. He had to use his hand as a shield for his mouth, which was within half an inch of Mortain's ear, before he could make him hear.

"The position is this," he said. "While you were asleep we had orders from Quebec to come here, look for the Red Fleet, 'damage' it as much as possible, and report its strength by wireless. Just before Bradshaw woke you we sighted it steaming west, and we're now about fifty miles ahead of it, with the clouds between us."

"What are we going to do?"

"Surprise it. Think you've been down here long enough?"

"Quite long enough. I was never so cold before."

"Then come up to the bridge, and hold tight, for we shall go round at any minute now. That's the time when the best airmen may be jerked off."

The watch below was having breakfast when they went through the men's quarters. In the centre was a great electric kettle full of steaming coffee, from which the mess tins were filled. Their rations were corned beef, ship's biscuits, butter, and jam. The coffee smelt very fragrant. Mortain noticed that the vibration made it very difficult for the men to drink without spilling the liquid down their chins, and a recruit was cursing this circumstance fluently.

Suddenly the Golden Eagle heeled, flinging Mortain sprawling on the deck, and began to sweep round majestically in the lonely immensity of the upper air. When he got to the bridge he saw that her prow was pointed to the newly risen sun, still low in the sky. He felt that the great ship had towered till the very sun himself was below her. It is a solemn thing when the thought of the numberless fathoms of water under her keel comes home to one who journeys across the ocean in a steamer, and he realises that his life depends on the staunchness of a half-inch shell of painted steel. To Mortain, insecurely balanced between the eternal firmament and the writhing clouds, the shuddering warplane to which he clung seemed to be the most desperate refuge that had ever upheld a man over the black abyss of death. His soul raved at him, and protested its unreadiness to turn its back upon time and face the forever.

"Death must come," it said. "It comes to all men. That is certain. The limbs of every man must grow still and cold, the heart cease from its incessant task, the nostrils no longer drink in the air—but not yet! There is so much that may be done."

V.

He had the illusion that he was clinging desperately to a projectile aimed at the sun. The warplane drove on and on, while the thin, chill air screamed past her, pressing mercilessly against him in an unending, immensely patient effort to tear him from his hold, and cast him down through the surging clouds and the sea of air to the waiting ocean, to lie broken in the dim twilight of its bed. He thought of all the good ships choked in the graveyard ooze below, manned by bleached skeletons in rotting clothes, and haunted by strange blind fishes that have never looked upon the sunlight. And this great, gaunt, clamant thing that bore him was designed with skill for no better end than to fill the ghastly graveyard yet fuller, or, may-hap, to go down in ruin to it herself.

The men in her were selected and trained meticulously to beat out on every wind, fierce gale, or the gentle airs that coax the young corn into growth, and spout death from that sky

to which, since the first seeds of worship woke to life in him, man has turned eyes of hope, seeking the kindly face of God. The welkin, whose remote lovelinesses mother the poetry even in the churl, had been made only a fresh pathway for human blood lust. Mortain felt guilty himself that he had any hand or part in even a single day of such damned doings. The Golden Eagle was only a creature of prey, beautiful in her strength, her speed, her daring, but savage as the bird without ruth from whom she was named, and fiercer far.

McKenzie, noticing his white face, handed him a flask of wine.

"Drink some," he said. "You look faint. You are over-excited."

"What is going to happen?" Mortain asked, when he had gratefully drunk.

"The idea of the thing is this. The Red Fleet is supposed to have forced the Straits of Dover, and to be now on its way to attack Quebec, convoying imaginary troopships. Our fleet follows it, but is a day behind, and our work is to lame as many of the enemy as we can, so that the Blue Fleet, as ours is called, may have a chance of catching up and fighting a battle. Both are skeleton fleets, for it does not do to get too far away from the Narrow Seas in these days."

"What are you going to do?"

"This!" said McKenzie. He wrenched at a lever. Immediately the warplane began to fling herself downwards, and in the time that a man could draw two breaths she had buried her nose in the cloud bank. For a few seconds she dived through masses of whirling mist, and then, suddenly, she was flying in a rainstorm over the sea, the sunshine now far above her, her engines stopped, silent.

McKenzie pointed east, and Mortain, peering down, saw five men-o'-war steaming in line, and looking no bigger than so many fragments of a wooden match floating in a pond at a boy's feet. He grew sick and dizzy. He saw the warplane's gun swing downwards as it was trained on the foremost ship, and through all the evolutions its sights were in line with one of the vessels, while a handful of men took their stations below the Golden Eagle's body. Had it been war, they would have borne dynamite with them.

"Have they seen us yet?" Mortain asked, pointing to the tiny, moving shapes on the water below.

"Not yet," McKenzie said. "You'll hear their blank when they do."

All this while the ominous thing in the air was rushing silently down towards the fleet through the driving rain. Try to watch the sky when it is pouring, and then say what chance the men below had of seeing that scudding, blue-grey shape high in the deluge. Sound she made none, excepting the hum of the wind against the plane edges.

"Aren't we near enough?" Mortain asked.

"Not yet. Wait till they're under our keel."

"But you could hit them now?"

"Yes, but we might hit their armoured sides. What we want is to get directly above them, so that our shots could fall on their unprotected decks, and drive through and explode between their decks, or smash out below the waterline." He stood looking down upon them for a little, and then spoke through the telephone to the barbette. The great gun answered him, once, twice, thrice. It was well for the ships that this was but grim play, and not deadly earnest. The high-angle guns on the warships' decks began to answer, and at that moment the Golden Eagle's engines commenced to roar again, and, while the cannonade below roared out—too late—she got herself into the clouds again, and was lost to sight of those on the sea.

"We bagged a couple at least," McKenzie said.

"I've never played at hide-and-seek in the clouds before," Mortain shouted back.

"It's not over yet," Bradshaw said.

"What chance have they got against you?"

"That's what we shall never know till the real thing comes. Myself, I don't think they've a dog's chance. On a clear day, with no clouds, they

might manage to wing us, though how they're to do it, except by a fluke, when we're a couple of miles over their heads, and figure-skating among trailing clouds of glory, I can't see. You koow, we've got a dodge of squirting down fine green powder on them, and they can't see what we're doing till they've run out of it, and then we give them another dose. We drop it on a line in a bag, and when the jerk comes the bag is ripped, and the powder fans out. It makes an uncanny green fog, and the dust sets every one sneezing. I'd better call up Quebec."

"They say they hit you," Quebec answered. "They claim to have brought you down."

"If the ampire helieves that," said the Golden Eagle, "he's a good mark for the ennfidence trick. I sank one of their battleships and dynamited the decks of a cruiser."

"According to them, you were out of actien before you did a damned thing."

"They're pnlling the umpire's leg," answered the Golden Eagle, who knew who she was talking to, having been a cadet of the same entry with him at Osborne. "I came down on him in a rainstorm, and the first the admiral knew of me was that I had put a shell down his main hatch and wrecked his inwards. Having sunk him, I sent his nicest cruiser down to join him, and now he's come back from the dead to say he's scuppered me."

"Well, leave him alone, now," said Quebec. "If you've done all that to him you can leave him for the Blue Fleet to pick his bones. If he's put out of action you've no business to he fluttering about out there burning fuel. I'll expect you on the Plains of Abraham in four hours. Good-bye. How's England lenking?"

"Oh, just like England. I'll he along."

"Right. Perhaps you'll lunch with me—if you're not sent on elsewhere?"

"Delighted."

"Well, come and have some breakfast, Mr. Mortain," McKenzie said. "You must be hungry. We're going across to Canada now, without any more stunts."

"Thanks. I want some coffee badly. Where's Bradshaw?"

"It's his watch below. You'll find him in the wardroom, probably asleep."

"HATASU."

THE PALL MALL MAGAZINE

Christmas Double Number.

DECEMBER, 1912.

THE BELOVED OF AMON-RA.

BY WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.

I.

IN the reign of Thothmes and Hatasu—in the plague year of poisonous flies—at the great "City of the South" which Ptolemaic Greeks later named Thebes.

Unu-Amen, the son of Gera, a young man left handed and flute player to Pharaoh, lay stretched at the door of his cottage by the Nile, recalling the year of famine of his boyhood, and the more recent year of the plague of a Nubian invasion. The boomerang throwers, he thought, were worse than the flies, for they burned alive whoever fell into their hands. Unu-Amen had served with the archers against the invader, and remembered the horror of the Egyptian retreat across the desert under a brassy sky, the Nubians before and behind, signalling one another with drum tattoo to encompass the archers and let none escape. For two days he marched without water, and thus came to taste the further plague of thirst. All one afternoon he had walked by the side of a camel on whose neck every twenty minutes a drop of moisture gathered, which he caught on finger-tip and carried to his tongue. The remembrance parched his mouth, and raising a gourd, he drank from it water flavoured with herbs.

On both sides of the river extended the city, beloved of the Sun-god—the pride and delight of Egypt. In the early morning there rested upon its million dwellers a sense of ineffable repose. The stillness of the Nile was so intense that every sound smote the air. A quaver of voices trembled in the daybreak, a ripple of silver bells rose from the temples, a cock crowed in the distance, and the shriek of a mad prophet set the dogs barking.

An hour passed, and when the sun reached the horizon—a fiery globe intense and perfect as the hatred of the gods—Unu-Amen stood erect, and lifting his hands in adoration, murmured this brief prayer:

> O God, who givest me life,
> Give me a heart replete with thankfulness

Then, with a sigh, he added . . . " and Vashti!"

He glanced at the golden fire kindling on pylon and obelisk, the King's house spread like a cluster of jewels, the red sandstone temples like porphyry, the palms and myrtles of the plain called Rose of the Winds, the Garden of Oblivion, with its flowers seeming opalescent bubbles in the distance—and at the falcons circling tirelessly under the molten sky.

Unu-Amen's wooden cottage had become grey from age. Beside it grew the aromatic leeks that made his fleshpots savoury. The flute player was bright-

eyed, well-proportioned, cleanly and simple in his ways. There was a point of fancy even in his plain costume, for fashions came and went with the dynasties. He was still unmarried, although he had reached the age of twenty-five, a thing unusual in a civilisation where lads of fifteen were marriageable. Musician to Pharaoh, Confidant of Queen Hatasu, serving both with obsequious intelligence, as the Arabian Nights barber was allowed to serve Caliph, Princess, and Vizier, he was not without the courtier's art, and could talk enchantment, as well as draw it from his flute—the allegro of service to every wish.

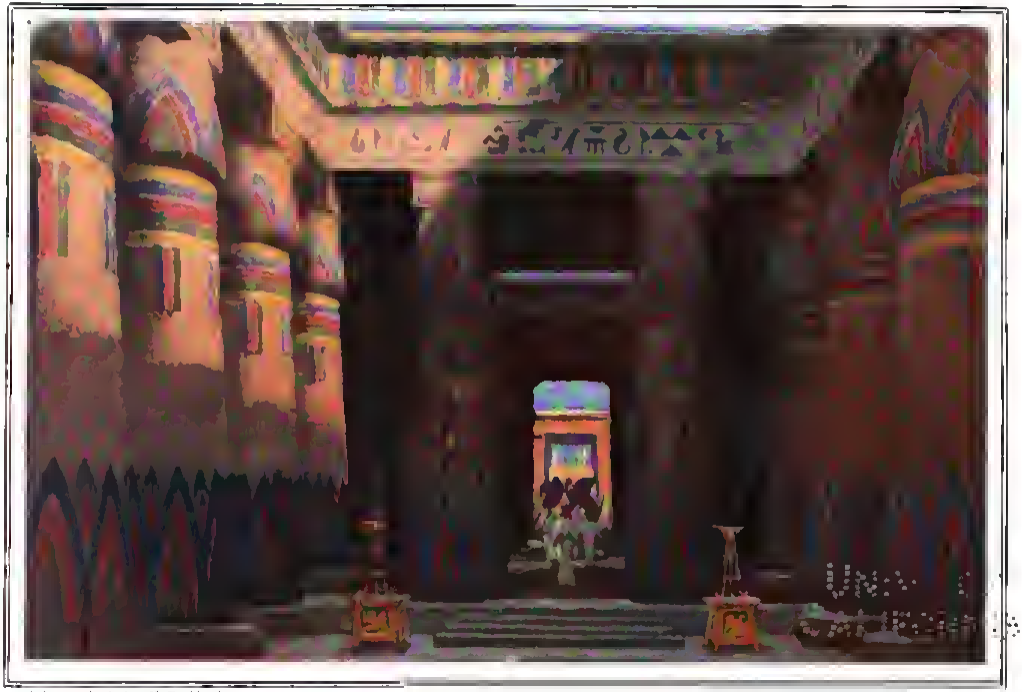
Having added a white skull cap to his linen gown, he strode away. Before him, feeling his steps with a staff, went one disguised as a half-blind beggar, who, having arrived opposite a window from which peered an elderly woman of Asiatic type, paused to lay two fingers upon his staff and went on. It was the house towards which Unu-Amen was going, and the woman, who laughed softly at the beggar's signal, suddenly checked her merriment at his approach. The young man entered her house and nodded to a girl seated on the floor, who had also observed the disguised man's motion, and understood it as well as her mother at the window. This was Vashti, dancer to Queen Hatasu, whose Assyrian name means "Bright Flame." Her face was darker than the Egyptian type, she had the high cheekbones of Pharaoh's Chimera, and full lips that burned with amorous colour over a flash of white teeth. More than once Unu-Amen had watched her standing motionless in the starlight, gazing across the flat lands, possessed by an instinctive and inherited memory of mountains she had never seen. Light-heeled as Isis, she was habited in a sleeveless garment, with bangles above her bare feet, and a blue handkerchief about her neck. She saluted the visitor with a grimace intended to convey what the beggar's signal meant, that she would presently be taken to the King's palace as a gift, for it was Pharaoh's birthday.

It was Pharaoh's birthday, and Vashti's mother, Baal-Zephon, who was afflicted with lameness, was to be among those touched by Thothmes. The priests had taught successive Pharaohs that to cure being an attribute of divinity, a King placed himself on a level with the gods by the use of his hand of healing. The leper who cried: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," voiced a belief derived from Egyptian bondage, and when the Master, touching him, said: "I will, be thou clean!" He spoke with the authority of Kingship, and established a practice of European kingcraft. So Baal-Zephon having set her house in order, had attired herself in an apron of wild-cat tails and a necklace of hyæna's teeth, and had richly scented her mane of black hair. She had become famous through her cure of animals and children ill-begotten. At the moment she was in gleeful humour, chuckling to think that presently she would be relieved of her debility and pocket a great price for her tawny daughter.

"Only one thing better than Pharaoh's touch," she had assured Vashti, . . "If only I could get the Red Chimera to lick me with its tongue!"

"What is the Red Chimera?" asked Vashti, incredulously.

"Listen, ne'er-do-well," gravely answered her mother. "In the reign of Mentu-Hetep, when Egypt was young and picture-writing was first used, the Basilisk which made its home in the desert sought the Chimera and said: 'O beloved of them that sung for joy, what shall I give thee to teach me the picture writing?' Now the Basilisk and the Chimera hated each other with a hatred like scorpion stings, and the Chimera said in its heart: 'Shall I teach wisdom to this scavenger!' So he spoke, saying: 'O, father of sleep, thou shalt give me thy gift which I have not to listen with mine ears and hear the thoughts of men. This swear to do by thine ancestor's right hand.' Wherefore the Basilisk gave the Chimera the one gift it had, and when the gift was his, he smote the Basilisk between the spare-ribs and the haslet so that it died. Whereat men laughed and mocked the dead Basilisk, and the Chimera had glory in Egypt, but the Basilisk's bones were defiled."



A drawing by Arthur H. Buckland

The Colonnade of the Temple of Karnak

"But what is a Chimera?" again asked Vashti.

"You may always know a Chimera by this," answered her mother, "that it steps upon the head of its own shadow."

When Unu-Amen entered Baal-Zephon contemptuously turned her back and busied herself with a round-bellied kettle wherein simmered fragments called in her native Chaldæa poor man's breakfast.

The flute-player came close to Vashti and said with a lover's bluntness: "You are sold to the palace, a birthday gift to Thothmes; if rather you will cast in your lot with mine, Amasis, the fisherman, shall take us instantly away in his fleet-winged boat."

As he finished Baal-Zephon turned and pointed in angry silence to the door.

The young man spoke hotly. "What you seek," he said, "is a tinsel thing gone to-morrow—a perfumed and shameful way." Then meeting Vashti's eyes he paused. There was in them a look which he read ere it floated like a falling leaf and vanished.

The girl followed him unnoticed to a neighbouring lane where they had often met, and seated herself on the edge of a drinking trough.

"Thothmes likes us young—aged fourteen, like me," she said with a bitter laugh. "Indeed," she added gravely, "I should go with you if escape were still possible, but none knows better than you it is not. We should be brought back and whipped—that is Hatasu's way."

"Is not our only possible chance," interrupted Unu-Amen, "to lose ourselves among the riverside villages?"

"There is but one door of escape," replied Vashti. "Tell the Queen I am already married to you. Then Thothmes will not want me, and Hatasu will cast both you and me out of her life."

Being unaware that it was the Queen herself who destined Vashti as a gift to her half-brother husband on his festal day, he fastened upon the thought that she alone could prevent this disposal of her attendant. There was not an instant to lose, and half an hour later Unu-Amen was admitted to the Queen's study, where he had often been. It was a large room with an ebony work-table, covered with papers and alabaster lamps and a porcelain inkstand with quill pens and cylinder seals. There were inlaid sofas and chairs and goat-skin rugs and leopard-skin cushions for those who preferred to sit upon the floor. The Queen often occupied a stool carved with heads of her four hereditary enemies, Assyrian, Hebrew, Bedouin and Nubian. Against the wall stood a mother-of-pearl cabinet, near which was a table of games with draughts and dice box. On the walls were metal mirrors, an ivory guitar, ostrich-plume fans, and her dead father's death-dealing boomerang. Curtains half-concealed the entrance to her bedroom, wherein were a feather bed, a golden washstand service, a dressing table with wig-stands and cosmetics and incense burners. With this inner chamber likewise Unu-Amen was familiar.

In the year 1500, as far in advance of the Christian era as Columbus came after, Queen Hatasu, "Chief among the Greatest," as her father had named her, or Ma-Ka-Ra, the Beloved of Amon-Ra, as with malicious intention she styled herself, was thirty years old. The priests, for motives of dynastic interest, had brought about a marriage between her and her young half-brother. Two daughters had been born to her, and among the prophets there were not wanting those who smiled as they dwelt upon her appellation, "The sun-god's beloved." She had fine features and a face filled with inscrutable force. Her jewel-like eyes contracted in the sunlight, and her head being cropped she wore a fabulously-floating mass of black hair. She was shod with soft slippers, wore a gown dyed to the blue of the sea, and on her neck and fingers were amulets. As a Queen playing the adventurous game of power she had long since swept aside all feminine vanities and foibles.

She was alone when Unu-Amen entered, and the slaves who led him to her

door withdrew at its threshold. The flute-player paused to gaze at her with thrilling remembrance. How often in the growing dusk had he seen her hand flutter its amorous signal. Her favour had come suddenly and unexpectedly, as the best things usually do. For five years it had been his absorbing passion, not wholly without its tremor, for who could be sure that a Queen's caprice to-night might not end in a bow-string to-morrow. Surely it was the inspiration of his music that had made his love vibrant with mystical whisper of the river and with the poetry of opalescent skies.

In that instant's pause she looked at him fixedly, drawing near in feline silence, then suddenly she caught her favourite by the shoulders and kissed him as though she sought to kiss his very soul. How strange a telepathy gave to each the consciousness that their lips were meeting for the last time!

"O Queen," murmured her lover, "is it not the gift of a goddess to bid me dare and fear not!"

"You will need all your courage," replied Hatasu curtly. "The Chimera has poisoned the King's mind. That hateful creature is as old as suffering, as strong as a dying man's lust of life, and when it stands in the sunlight I read its crimson heart. In my sleep I hear its accusation, and more than once I have perceived on Thothmes' face the wish that I may die. To pass from the wish to an order is a step."

Unu-Amen deftly seized his opportunity.

"It is an hour," he said with deliberation, "that calls for resolute action. Those suspicious must at once be disarmed."

"And by what craft," asked Hatasu, looking intently in his face, "is this to be done?"

"Our situation," he continued, gathering courage, "demands an heroic sacrifice."

"And that," pursued the Queen, seeming to anticipate his words, "is to be . . . ?"

"A daring stroke, provided we possess the nerve it requires."

"And that daring stroke," echoed the Queen with quivering lips. "Can you define it?"

"Suppose," exclaimed the musician abruptly, as one who would have done, "I feign a marriage?"

"With whom?" carelessly asked Hatasu.

"With any, since it is feigned. Think how instantly that would silence the King's brooding!"

"Have you thought of one better suited than another?"

"One of your fan bearers or handmaids or dancing girls," suggested Unu-Amen.

"Dancing girls!" retorted the Queen with emphasis. "The one you have been seen with—the one whose thought haunts me, whose face is in every shadow, whose breath is upon my shoulder, whom I am giving this very day to Thothmes—VASHTI!"

Unu-Amen winced at the name, and stood silently watching Hatasu clasping and unclasping her hands, her face red with the rage that murders.

"O Queen," he stammered, "why do you look thus, is there such deadly mischief in a word of truth?"

The answer was an uncontrollable burst of tears. And he knew that the unseen hand which moves so many startling changes had thrown wide a closed shutter.

"My lover that was," she said at length, "you that can stab me to the heart, I have read your secret in your eyes. For weeks Vashti has been near you, and how must you have changed, you that had risen to the lips of a queen, to grovel at the feet of a slave!"

The young man sought in vain to appease her. "If I spoke heedlessly," he whispered, "forgive me. Flowers do not cease to bloom because of a cloud in

A drawing by Arthur H. Buckland.

He glanced at the golden fire kindling on pylon and obelisk, the Kieu's houses spread like a cluster of jewels, the red sandstone temples like sorcbury "

the sky. What are tears but water—if two hearts mingle them they dry. You and I are above trifles. We have returned to the days when the gods walked upon earth and made love to the daughters of men. You once said our lives should always be at the edge of Spring. For this I have gone each Spring to the Painted Rocks to gather flowers that breathed your promise, for this I have lingered by the river, reading as you taught me the meaning of life in its curves."

"Was it for this," coldly interrupted the Queen, "that Vashti also sought those inspirations?"

"Never once," pursued Unu-Amen unheeding, "have I lost the joy of that hour when first I beheld you, a princess, standing before the multitude, an image of beauty, whose radiance the very breeze proclaimed."

"Yes," answered Hatasu. "You brought me the gift of an adventurous heart, and something of it will remain. A bird sings to the mate it remembers. In the midst of untried things you were my desire, and my heart sang when you came. But the fruit we should not have tasted is transient. Would it have been better had we never met? Farewell. Go your way and leave me to mine."

When her lover had withdrawn, she went to the window, and with arms outstretched to the crimson sun-god breathed this prayer:

Thou that art pure as flame, keep me undefiled.
Eyes of Light, knowing the vanity of shadows, defend me from evil meditation.
Preserve me from false measures in the spoken word.
May I never turn the water of life from its appointed course.
Thou who endurest for ever, have compassion upon me, whose life is a day.
Thou who art infinite, spare me who am a mote in the air.
Thou who knowest all wisdom, give light to me who walk in the dark.
Above all, grant me that I may never again know
The Agony of Love.

II.

It was Pharaoh's twenty-third birthday, though with his wrinkled face and thinning hair he looked much older. He had bead-like eyes, lips that drooped feebly, a startled manner, and bad teeth. Upon his head he wore the sun-blood fringe of Egypt, and at his girdle hung four small bronze keys. However haunted by a dread of the catastrophes which wait upon the footsteps of kings, the habit of dominion had given him a hardness that said, "The fat of the land is mine." He loved to read aloud the maxims of Cheops, and illustrate them with mordant comments. His wish—the wish of all weakness—was to be thought strong. About him on every side were calm and statuesque emblems of centuries of greatness, and he wondered what would bear token to his little life when it had ended.

He had reached an age when it occurs to many men that certain important things might have been done better. Thus far the game of life had meant himself against the world. Bondsmen, whose anguished moaning came up to him—his savage and sullen Nubian troops, a ferocious remnant of the Bedouin invaders, intractable priests, insatiable gods, his masterful half-sister wife—what wonder if the flowers had grown dry of their morning freshness! He was still stirred with early ambitions, only knowing that in some unaccountable way the cup Osiris offered had slipped. Having failed in everything, he loved the heroic for others, and for himself cried, "Huh!" and in dumb show delivered a deadly stroke in the air. Even yet, might not he spoil the game for his devilish mate, and wear the crown alone?

The day was to be divided between a detested duty and royal pleasure. At noon he would touch a score of tainted subjects, as in later times our monarchs touched for the King's evil. It was Thothmes' fear that far from working a cure, he might contract some hideous distemper. This task disposed of, he would feast, and the great ones would anoint his feet. His throat had just been touched

with a medicated feather by his priest physician, for he suffered from ulcerated tonsils.

Now he leaned at ease in the Garden of Oblivion and looked upon the Nile, the infinity and mystery of whose flowing had of old set the priests musing upon the eternal questions of life. Its breadth lay gleaming in a scene of ineffable beauty, and behind it rose the antiquity of its guardian hills that lead the thought back to a virgin creation. A light pink vapour seemed the breath of the gods. Upon a shoal a dozen crocodiles were sleeping, and nearer by a flamingo spread its crimson wings and sailed away. At his feet was a sedge of bulrushes, like that wherein later a Pharaoh's daughter discovered her child.

The enchanted Garden of Oblivion, as strange and beautiful as new-born love, was a sanctuary set apart for the meditations of successive Pharaohs, in to which filtered only a dim green light of day. Occasionally some choice spirit among the priestly lotus-eaters was admitted to commune upon the blinding revelations of death. About its pomegranates and oleanders hovered a fragrance fire as the incense of prayer. There were alcoves for dreamers where grew the shadow-sheltered anguish and joy of love. Carved in granite stood the girl Isis holding the infant Horus, thus anticipating the Virgin and Child. In the witchery of its deep repose generations of royal lovers had passionately kissed.

The night before, walking in sleep through a king's domain of star-sown dreams, Pharaoh had beheld a vision of unusual import. Although asleep, he had become conscious that the Chimera's bright eyes were fastened upon him. He remembered that the last time its face had appeared thus inspired with life, it had looked up from the depth of placid water. He tried now to move, but the strange creature bade his spirit follow without waking, and walk in the moonlight's whiteness.

"O lofty of plumes," it said, "I have come to reveal the hidden springs."

"My life," muttered Thothmes, "has been a searching after things no man can find, and longing for that you tell me does not exist. What avail the smooth promises of such as you?"

"All men," answered the Chimera, "even you who shall sit beside Anubis in the golden hereafter, wish to profit by the unexpected. An opportunity to do so is the gift I bring."

"Why is it you only bring me evil tidings?" cried the King.

"This once, evil or good as you make it. Is it not mine to perceive instantly how many drops are in a beaker of wine?"

Half awake, half comprehending, Thothmes reverted wearily to his lamentable heart-burnings and hates with Hatasu. Wife she had been in name, yet by this priest-imagined marriage there had been two children.

The winged feline read his thoughts and whispered, "In life approach not too close to the Immortals."

"Which of the Immortals sends you to vex me now?"

"Judge for yourself. All along the river the lilies and lotus are drooping; yesterday at dawn the smoke blew three ways, last evening the Horus-falcons were wailing their funeral song, at the change of the moon I beheld the heavenly fields all bathed in shadow."

"This means imminent danger. What have I done to deserve punishment?—I in whose heart is hatred of the thing unusual or new."

"With the warning I bring knowledge. Often when you sleep I crouch by the emblems meditating the forces of your life."

Thothmes hesitated. "You once promised," he said, glancing furtively down, "to tell me something concerning the Queen."

The Chimera looked fixedly in Thothmes' face with the eyes of a dog that beholds its master. "Twice I have told you she is beloved of Amon-Ra."

"In the form of what mortal, O wise one?" queried the King.

"Perhaps you may know that to-day. If any man give you a pair of gold-

A drawing by Arthur H Buckland

"*The Garden of Oblivion.*"

smith's scales for a gift, it is he that apes in human semblance the attributes of a god, and in his guile is a deadly menace."

Then, restless as a nightmare, the Chimera faded into space.

Pharaoh's reverie was interrupted by the familiar voice of Queen Hatasu coming alone, informally to wish him joy, as became a half-sister who is also a wife.

"O soaring Falcon," she said, "each day shall your greatness be sung to music. May it be yours hereafter to drink from the wine-cup of Isis."

The King advanced to take his consort by the hand, and motioning to a cushioned seat answered, "Huh! your words are like wild honey; may you walk without touching the earth. I was spending an idle hour fancifully listening in this drowsy calm to the rhythmic foot-beat of generations of women shuffling in splendid nudity up and down yonder floor."

"It is enough to be Pharaoh and watch the gilded hours speed," answered the Queen. "Yet there is here a happy coincidence with your fancy, for I have a girl to offer you at the feast to-day, one brought from some melody-haunted sun-land of dance. To thee, wearer of sparkling gems, be this plaything given!"

"Huh! What is her name?"

"Vashti," replied the Queen. "That in her language means *Bright Flame*. She shall be fan-bearer, she shall fill the wine-cup, she shall sing; blood of a Bull! shall she not dance?"

"It is well," replied her consort moodily, his eyes sunk and smouldering, "and I thank you. It will be good to behold something that shall efface last night's grim vision. Do you, who walk with the gods, ever behold illuminating dreams?"

"The life of Pharaoh," answered the Queen with emphatic terseness, "should always be transfigured. Only the life that lacks an ideal is all shadow. But what was last night's vision? Has the Chimera been walking again in its sleep? Speak, Pharaoh! and may the gods listen."

Before the King replied she divined the import and menace of his answer, and leaned familiarly toward him with lips parted in eager and smiling expectation.

"Yes," assented Thothmes, "it was the Chimera that walked in the night, promising me a sign, speaking with fine prophecy, reasoning as doth Anubis with line and rule and measuring stick."

To a few the emotion of danger gives a refined and delicate pleasure. A careless defiance was in Hatasu's face as she asked:

"What becomes of the brave resolves of your solitude? What serves that brooding calm that lifts the heart of Kings if it brings no courage? But come, what hath the nightmare spoken?"

"For once," answered Thothmes, "its word is to be immediately tested. This day, if a certain incident happen, it will signify the guilt of one very near the throne."

"Am I that one?" questioned the Queen without flinching.

"May Amon-Ra forbid!" ejaculated Thothmes evasively, and with a thin smile at his own humour. "The sign if it appear will reveal a lurking treason as shadow gives token of substance."

Seeing it useless to question further, the Queen dismissed the matter carelessly, saying:

"If wrong hath been done it must be undone."

"That," observed the King with sarcastic inflection, "is perhaps impossible." He turned aside with a suppressed chuckle, and Hatasu's glance followed him with implacable hatred.

"Impossible!" she echoed with masculine decision; "he is not Pharaoh that cannot break the will of others. Remember the maxim of your favourite Cheops, 'A slave well scourged listens with both ears, and speaks with a long tongue.'"

"We shall know more presently," answered Thothmes. "The priests tell

me that one who possesses a power of healing can never be in the wrong. May your Vashti bring me joy!"

As the Queen departed she heard him humming the song of Sobek, the fish-god:

Day after day, each passes into darkness,
Whilst I who linger, marvel and am still

She knew not that her consort had previously sent for Unu-Amen, who was waiting the King's pleasure in the royal work-room.

Returned to his apartment the King paused to look from an open window into the laughing eyes of Spring. He remembered with a pang the exuberance of his youth. At twenty-three he felt suddenly and strangely old. He realised the weight of his own incapacity, and hated it with inherited pride. In his face was the weariness of ages, and in his heart it seemed to him that he had known some subtle influence of fifty centuries ago, as if at some remote time he had grasped and pondered over the truths his priests were groping after now.

Unu-Amen, observing him attentively, mistook his contemplation across the fat lands and the exalted city for the complacent rejoicing of one who gazes upon his own. He advanced, and with reverent salutation made his presence known.

"Cycles hence," he said, speaking with respectful familiarity, "when your race shall have taken its station amid the stars, Isis and Osiris shall still cast blessings over the incense land the Pharaohs foved."

Thothmes nodded carelessly, settled himself upon a heap of cushions and muttered—

"What am I but a beggar in the night?"

The flute-player looked on with surprised interest. To be Pharaoh and at twenty-three weary of life passed comprehension. Then, coming nearer, he exclaimed:

"O Master, on this of all days lift up your wayward heart."

The King regarded him with a sidewise tilt of the head and answered:

"In the book of Cheops it is written, 'Some lives go deep and some go far and some only sleep in the sun.' Which think you, O bearer of a gift, am I?"

"May the Queen bear thee a son," answered Unu-Amen gravely.

Thothmes checked him with an impatient gesture.

"The Chimera tells me," he said bitterly, "that the blood of Amon-Ra will flow in that son's veins."

"The Chimera," objected the musician, "hath been shifty since that memorable day when it defrauded the Basilisk, since the day when it bargained with the first Hebrew in this land."

"Who was the first of the Hebrews?" inquired Pharaoh.

"His name," answered Unu-Amen, "was Joseph, and he it was that laid out the Garden of Oblivion in the dim days of Apepa, the swarthy. In whose eyes Joseph found favour, for he was a surpassing dreamer of dreams.

"And meeting the Chimera in a dream, Joseph asked, 'What wilt thou have, O Bestower of years, to give me one hundred trees so enchanted that in the transfigured Past they shall always be beautiful with the light of happy remembrance?' Wherefore the Chimera answered, 'I want money, which the Hebrews use and the Egyptians know not. Give me one hundred pieces of gold so subtly refined that they shall always buy my heart's desire, whether it be to read what is written upon the stars, or to give or withdraw the favour of woman, or to buy and sell the toil of men.' Now the Chimera read in Joseph's heart that he would take molten lead and gild the same in discs and stamp them with Apepa's cartouche. So he took young trees and cunningly painted them crimson and turquoise and amber, and they were planted in the Garden of Oblivion. But as the seasons passed their painted brilliance faded, whereat Joseph was wroth and cursed the Chimera, saying, 'O Son of ill-luck, didst not thou covenant that their enchantment should endure?' Then the Chimera laughed and cast the

A drawing by Arthur H Buckland

"Her dance had the mountan of later Eleusinian mysteries—typifying in Egypt male and female emblems, the lotus and the lily"

worthless money at Joseph's feet. Nevertheless, so magical had been the Chimera's touch, that to this day, faded though the trees be, sometimes in the dawn or twilight they shine with recovered glory so that men know their joy, though it be spent, hath not been wholly in vain."

"I have heard something like it," observed Thothmes, "the priest who told it me said nothing less than a Chimera could match a Hebrew, or a left-handed man."

"To this day," continued Unu-Amen, "the Hebrews make discs of gold and weigh them upon a tiny balance. Such a craftsman's instrument graven with Hebrew signs I bring, Master, on your birthday, in token that hereafter, when my heart is weighed, there shall be found in it no guile to thee."

At sight of this gift, which the Chimera had foretold, Pharaoh seemed to receive an electric shock. His rectangular body leaped from the floor, and snatching the object he dashed it in the giver's face.

The young man crimsoned as the metal rattled at his feet, then grew deadly pale. Without understanding, without connecting thought with thought, he read the fierce menace in Thothmes' eyes.

And Pharaoh standing motionless, glaring down upon the toy, heard the musician's receding steps and remembered with a pang the saying of Cheops, that Amon-Ra walketh in the house of the Kings and Queens he loves.

III.

In Pharaoh's banquet hall were seated fifty feasters, with a fringe of dancers, musicians and tumbling dwarfs and a scurrying bevy of cupbearers and carvers. The noon-day sunlight streamed in overhead, in the corners were braziers filled with burning spice, on the floor were painted images of Egypt's Asiatic and African enemies, so that in entering to sit at meat the King had the satisfaction of treading upon the vanquished. On this occasion the company included a dozen foreign chiefs, hungry with seven-fold hunger, and gulping their food with ecstatic contentment. Their discourse was wordy interchange of compliments, with boastful jokes, through which occasionally flew a whispered damning stone. From the wall looked down Horus, the forever speechless, with granite finger laid on graven lips.

There was music of harps and silver lutes—a river of tumultuous sound, which the performers pierced with amorous vocalisms, like the long, smooth howling of wolves. Amid crisp odours and iridescent lights the hot wine of many strings smote the air with fire, while potent beverages warmed the heart.

Thothmes had come direct from the sanctuary, where with wide-flung gesture he had danced a whirligig of adoration. To this day, on the Temple walls the ancients painted, we behold Semti dancing before Osiris, Usertsen flying apace before his special god Amsu, and Sethos whirling before the goddess Nekhebet. Like many classics, these dances are of unknown antiquity, and later we find David executing them "with all his might" before the Lord.

The King sat alone at a raised table, after a glance of careless salutation towards his guests. A porcelain pan which exhaled an appetising meaty smell was placed before him, and near by was his tray of wines and distilled liquors. In spite of frequent painting of his troublesome tonsils he was disturbed by coughing, and now to soothe his throat he drew the roe from a fresh-caught fish and let it melt deliciously in his mouth.

It was a long repast, wherein figured those fleshpots the Hebrews regretted, filled with a stew of kid with cream sauce of garlic and carrots flavoured with pepper. There was bread to be finger-dipped in gravy, and cahots of mutton and onion skewered on slender sticks and pigeon pies with fresh mushrooms and cauliflower in its ivory and green perfection, and chicken bones wrapped in lettuce leaves. Beside Thothmes sat the Queen, eating nothing, her statuesque

arms bare to the shoulder. In the black-diamond sparkle of her eyes leaped so fierce a passion that the King was startled from his calm.

Vashti had entered unnoticed, and was standing with slender body draped in pale blue, her garment so translucent and impalpable as to suggest to Pharaoh's appreciative gaze the turquoise smoke of a camp-fire. In face, in the half-open Chaldæan gown, in the curious braids of her hair, she was alien. At sight of her the circling of beer and wine and spirits ceased, and the silence tingled with a hush of expectancy. She heard unheeded an admiring murmur, and above the hum of voices and the patter of slaves the envious Nubian girls' soft, mocking laughter.

At a wave of Pharaoh's hand Unu-Amen raised his flute, and under his fingers that frail pipe became a whispering voice. To Thothmes it had always breathed a mirage of his life that might have been, but this once it spoke only of a heart's anguish. The melody was "The song of singing leaves," and between Pharaoh's sudden violence and Hatasu's wild hate the flute player was learning how narrow is the space between the upper and lower millstone. He doubted not that he looked for the last time upon Vashti, and that probably he should behold to-morrow's sunrise in the underworld. What wonder if he breathed into that well-known melody a new emotion at which Thothmes started, for might not this be the voice of Amon-Ra?

Then, as though moved by the persuasive sound, Vashti, saluting Pharaoh with the sunrise sign of reverence, stood in the midst. Beneath the floating film of blue her yellow body gleamed like ivory. Her dance had the meaning of later Eleusinian mysteries—typifying in Egypt male and female emblems, the lotus and the lily. Her bare feet fell as light as a thistle-blow in that picture of the joy of life which generations of girls had danced down the centuries. She, too, was at life's crisis, tossed to Pharaoh for a plaything, and when her dance ended and the flute's desire fluttered away, it seemed to Thothmes that both had died in a sob.

"Huh!" he cried dubiously, yet with admiring eyes for Vashti, "well done."

"Bid her dance again," suggested the Queen, "this time without that irksome drapery."

"Rightly said," ejaculated Pharaoh. "Pretty girl, you shall repeat those graceful movements without that gown. Off with it, Bright Flame, and dance."

At the command Vashti trembled, her small face set, her teeth a-glitter, her bare heel drumming on the floor. With a roving glance at the eager faces, her eyes met those of Unu-Amen, and turning to Pharaoh, she answered quietly,

"I will not."

An ominous hush followed, and on the King's face the smile of the would-be lover faded and the thin lips hardened. Here was Hatasu's opportunity, and she caught it on the bound. "O vivifier of the heart," she whispered in Pharaoh's ear, "that refusal is because she loves another."

"You make ill choice of your gifts," retorted Thothmes. "As Hathor holds my heart I will touch her vitals with fire. Who is the man she loves?"

Hatasu nodded towards the flute player. "A favourite of yours, O King," she answered, "ill chosen as my gift. This morning I ordered him out of my sight, only to behold his insolent lustful face here at your feet!"

Her consort fixed his eyes upon Unu-Amen, and a wave of envious hatred surged within him. The Chimera's warning smote his heart, and his white face twisted, remembering the meaning of the gift of scales. "I will shorten him by a head," he thought, beckoning the Captain of his archers.

"Doth the lion suffer a jackal to take the kill from before him?" whispered the Queen. And when they turned again toward their guests both Vashti and Unu-Amen had left the room.

The disgraced favourite understood his peril as well as if the summary phrases of those he had wounded reached his ear. He knew that his Master's frail hand held the blade of death, but he also remembered that the hand upraised to strike

"Upon that shrunken visage are white stains such as no other mummy shows.

is sometimes curiously delayed A few minutes' grace would give him such revenge as the gods might envy—a few lucky hours would place him and Vashti beyond even the Chimera's ill-will. First he must reach the King's rooms to make ready a surprise and to break his flute, now become an emblem of servitude, and cast its fragments where Pharaoh must presently pass.

Accustomed as he was to the King's confidence, he made his way to the royal apartments, where he knew that an armourer had been employed polishing a case of weapons. This workman had gone to his noonday meal, leaving his rubbing cloths and a jar of corrosive stramonium. On a shelf, amid other ointments, was the tincture with which Pharaoh's tonsils were bathed. It was the work of an instant to fill the vial with the armourer's deadly polish, and to empty the medicine into the jar. But upon reflection he did not break his flute, knowing that its fragments would be a danger signal.

None saw the deed but the red Chimera, which, in the form of a seated panther with folded wings, occupied a niche high up on the wall. Motionless as the sphinx, it seemed forever fixedly regarding that future which it alone discerned. It was so placed as to look from an uncurtained window upon the sun rising. Thus for centuries it had gazed across the aerial stillness of Egypt toward the rim of an untouched world. The flute player scanned its familiar outline intently, but its graven calm was undisturbed. One instant he fancied a spark leaped in those unwinking eyes, but he dismissed this impression. He felt safe, knowing that even a Chimera walks in dread of a left-handed man.

He was grimly chuckling at the piquancy of his jest, when in a lane outside the palace he came upon Vashti, a mantle wrapped about her, frightened, weeping, grey as drift wood, standing amid the buzzing flies.

"He shall not make me . . . he shall not make me!" she sobbed.

The flute player was intent upon the poisonous plague and brushed the flies from her. "Come far with me," he whispered . . . "to the sea . . . the sea shall speak to us and we can learn." He smoothed back the soft hair, and she smiled with a gleam of white teeth.

"Yes," she answered, her hand in his, "it matters little whose speech I hear, so it be not Pharaoh's voice."

"We must escape instantly," said Unu-Amen, speaking as quickly as his thought. "Our safety depends upon minutes. Through all ages there have been voiceless yet guiding companions—perhaps one such will befriend us now."

Outcasts both, her lover led swiftly to the humble seriousness of his cottage. If the archers delayed ever so little he and Vashti might reach the river, hire or steal a skiff, cross to the other side, and at that distance float safely away with the stream.

His preparations were finished in an instant. A gourd of wine and a piece of smoked beef against starvation, and in his right hand his curved flat-bladed throw-stick, as deadly as an axe.

He carefully scanned the way before them, only fifty yards to the water. Beside him stood Vashti alert and ready, her eyes fixed on the shallow water amid whose rushes archers might lurk—where girls went daily to bathe and which from this circumstance Thothmes humorously called the "Bosom of the Nile."

"Come," said Unu-Amen, "let us pass from this life into another."

His words were prophetic.

Their pursuers had watched and followed from the moment of their meeting, close yet unperceived—now they sprang upon their prey. Vashti's heart stood still—then she leaped like an animal in fear of its life. But she sprang towards the danger, not from it. One of the half-dozen archers received Unu-Amen's curved ebony stick deep in his skull. A second discharged an arrow that tore the flute player's arm, and a violent scuffle followed. Their leader caught Unu-Amen by the throat, but his hand relaxed as Vashti drove the small blade she carried in her hair into his vitals. There was much outcry amid the falling of

heavy clubs. Then together they broke from their assailants, and bleeding and maimed, dashed back into the cottage and barred its door.

For all his pain, Unu-Amen's thought was that his Royal Master had mercifully ordered him beaten—not slain—and his heart warmed at the clemency of kings. "It is a small hurt," he said, as Vashti bound his arm and brought water to drink. "A beating," he added with quivering lips, "is the slight punishment that Pharaoh accords to the bearer of ill-tidings."

An hour passed, while the young man lay thinking over that eventful day. The sunset light must be on the turquoise hills now, and it smote him to know that he might never again behold them. At that hushed hour, the land was as still as its own ancient memories. He knew that the sandstone mountains were glowing with riot of fairy colour. He could hear the sing-song of droning prophets rising with lazuli threads of sacrificial smoke above the temples. And he laughed aloud at the thought that to the mind of Egypt, the sunbeams fading from his lattice were the outstretched vanishing fingers of Amon-Ra.

IV

The night that followed was long to the two inmates of Unu-Amen's cottage. Bruised as he was, and Vashti forlorn and frightened—in her ears an incessant buzzing of the fever-sleep carrying fly. He rested on his leather-thonged bed, and she lay upon cushions on the floor. At dawn they talked a little, seeking to comfort one another. "Fear not," said the young man, looking fondly upon her; "it is winter now, yet through yonder lattice I see the springtime coming from the stars." At the words, tears rose to Vashti's eyes, and in her despair she crept swiftly for an instant's embrace into his wounded arms.

"Woe is me!" she cried, "that the stars, in whose symmetry my country reads the writing of Fate, have borne for me a changeless rigour."

"Nay," answered Unu-Amen, "if the stars are the eyes of Eternity, as your seers teach, how can they behold us without compassion? But I perish of hunger. We may wait days before venturing out, wherefore, since I cannot move, go you to the kitchen and get bread and meat."

When she returned he was thinking of the Painted Rocks beyond the tamarisks, where a year before, at the month of falling leaves, he had first seen Vashti. He called her to him now, and, startled at her tears, touched her wet cheeks with his hand. "Do you remember that day," he asked, "and the words that I whispered?"

"Yes," instantly answered the girl, as though her thoughts also had been with that meeting. "I knew you meant me when you said, '*The topmost flickering branch*,' which my mother overheard, and reproved us both, saying, 'At the first stolen kiss between man and maid, something that never returns to her flies away.'"

"And now," said Unu-Amen, embracing her, "so strange are the vagaries of unexpected things, that we are fugitives alone together, your lot cast in with mine *for ever*, as men declare, which for us had nearly proved this one remaining day!"

The morning hours passed in such quiet that the musician wondered Vashti neither came to him nor spoke till looking about he beheld her lying on the cushions where she had spent the night. She had brought no bread as he had asked, but lay on her back, her eyes wide open and bright with fever, her lips moving in hasty and ceaseless repetition. Her fingers plucked tirelessly at the coverlet beneath which she lay, and above her circled the flies.

Presently, in his delirium, he wandered to his five years' love of Hatasu. He fancied himself again the amorous sun-god, and wondered had she first tired of him or he of her? He laughed in exultation, crying, "Life has not been all in vain since I have worn the sandals of Amon-Ra." But his merriment died as he lay looking down upon Vashti's pale face and saw the pink foam on her lips.

"You may well gaze upon her," hissed a voice he had never before heard, "she listens to the singing of the stars!"

Unu-Amen raised his head, and beheld a shadow which he knew to be Pharaoh's Chimera. He had often seen that graven demon perched in the palace, where it had stood through many reigns.

"By my grandsire's heart," exclaimed the creature, "is it not always thus—your laughter spent, a tear glistens? The dipping of the day draws near, and I must go. Upon such as you is lavished the gift of transcendent love—such love as the gods seek when they walk upon earth and tempt the daughters of men. To a harlequin wearing the divine circlet has it been given to touch the lips of a queen . . . and now, she whom Pharaoh desired is dying at your feet"

Then, drawing nearer, it whispered, "He whose footstool you have usurped sends you his dying malediction!" And Unu-Amen beheld that the demon waved its deadly wings towards him, and understood that the archer's arrow was poisoned.

The Chimera's golden eyes faded, and its shadow glided away down the night; and, still wondering that Vashti lay so still, Unu-Amen fell asleep.

Suddenly something within him echoed a sound which was the voice of Hatasu, and with it the stroke of men beating in the door. Moved by the never failing impulse, the Queen craved only that one love whereof another was depriving her. The blood in her veins had been remembering the fervours, the passionate love-words, the abandonment of caresses. "Oh joy for ever," she cried, "am I too late to save you! Your cottage is the house of my dream. Oh, beloved, my heart in its anguish was with you hours ago!" Then standing, golden brown, at his bedside, and looking into the eyes that no longer beheld her, she spoke in the thrilling voice he had loved such sweet words of good cheer that for an instant his heart revived.

"You shall not die!" she cried. "If you hate enough and love enough you have a strong hold upon life. My lover, it is night. Come out with me and walk beneath the star-sweet sky as we have walked a hundred times, and I will give you back the blood-bounding life your slave girl so nearly ruined."

Then Unu-Amen, with a delirious effort, took the hand that he had loved in his and kissed it for the last time.

. . . . . .

In the days that ensued the Queen's heart kindled more and more with hatred of the Chimera which had discovered and revealed her secret, and which alone of all forces, braved her and bent not the knee. Knowing that a demon can be taken only in a web of its own device, she walked often in the Garden of Oblivion, where sometimes the Chimera strayed. And meeting it once at twilight-music she asked: "O Friend of Centuries, thou that hast watched over successive Pharaohs, as men watch over fine bread upon the oven, what reward shall I give thee ere I die?"

Now there dwelt in Egypt a Disillusion which was kin to the dead Basilisk, and which men named GLAD TO-MORROW. And to possess her love was beyond the craft even of the priests who know the knowledge of Cheops and the Book of the Dead.

So the Chimera answered: "Be it given me to taste the sweet lips of Glad To-morrow."

Then in the Garden of Oblivion Hatasu led the Chimera up and down the long walk, while it hungered after voluptuous lips, and longed for the touch of amorous hands. But when Glad To-morrow stood near, and the Chimera reached out, the Queen smote it with a deadly curse, whereat Glad To-morrow vanished and the Chimera's clutch was empty. And Hatasu cried with a loud voice: "Thou has stumbled, O Mighty One, from the cycle of destiny and art fallen to the level of men." And cleft by the words the transgressor's bold heart stood still.

In after years, when life was accomplished, Hatasu put away the bitterness of death, and her last words were of joy. "I have tasted the love of the gods,"

she was heard to murmur, "and have vanquished even the Chimera whose craft was above the diadem of earth."

. . . . . .

At the Ghizeh Museum the modern world may look upon the blackened face of Thothmes II., his mummy having been unearthed and placed in a glass case not far from the Chimera which inspired his life. Upon that shrunken visage are white stains such as no other mummy shows. These discolourations are not an effect of time, but followed upon death. One cannot look upon that gruesome fragment of humanity without remembering the armour polish with whose deadly oil Pharaoh's tonsils were bathed.

In an adjoining gallery is that red onyx Chimera, which lived through the reign of many Pharaohs. It has the outward appearance of a finely carved young panther seated upright with folded wings. It is chained to the pillar whereon it sits, as before it was thus fastened the museum was seven times mysteriously set on fire in the night—a brazier overturned, some inflammable materials kindled, a lighted lamp thrown down. Are all its attributes ended, or is the Curator right in suspecting that the graceful monster still lives—that its flinty brain is for ever meditating eternal problems—analysing the moods of the river, listening to the undersong of rustling palms and interpreting the prophecy of light and shade?

The creature is conspicuously placed, the afternoon light falling full upon its contours. Before it, across the gallery, is a window through which the figure looks upon the tamarisks and the shining river and the glory of the Egyptian sunset. And observing it in mute admiration, I wondered if perchance the Chimera's fateful gaze reaches beyond the earthly horizon to those days when it slew the Basilisk and read the astute heart of Joseph and listened to the secret imagining of kings.

. . . . . .

The hieroglyphs and painted reliefs which decorate Hatasu's Temple tell the story of the expedition she sent to the land of Punt sixteen hundred miles from modern Suez, equal to the distance across the Atlantic, and which bears a similitude to that world-wide discovery a Queen of Spain made possible three thousand years later. The walls are covered with inscriptions her successor partly destroyed, and with her image several times repeated.

It cannot be doubted that this is the Queen's life portrait—in its faded and shattered condition, less a portrait than a fugitive vision. It is the face of one who dared to seek adventure in the unknown and feared not. There is melody in its fine contours—like the sense of music that hangs round a silent harp.

It was from the lives of such as Hatasu that in a later age Greek scholars came to Egypt to learn the elements of philosophy. The puzzles of our nature are in all ages the same. The same things too strong to be mastered, the same bloom and curve and colour of emotion, the same subtleties and elations and griefs, the same futility and uselessness of all.

At Luxor, behind the sanctuary of the Temple of Thothmes I., amid the coolness and gloom of dead epochs, is the chamber where fifteen centuries before our era Hatasu went to commune with Amon-Ra. To-day, amid the noise of a mongrel race, we tread the pavement whereon she walked. High above, on the crumbling pylons, amid the liquid nocturne of antiquity, the Hoopoo still trills its rapture to the marble gods.

In classic times the love affairs of beautiful women with their deities were not infrequent. A notable instance is that of the mother of Philip of Macedon, who, while her husband was campaigning, received the visit of Zeus. When Alexander the Great visited Egypt the priests explained to him their studies and religion. And when they spoke of Amon-Ra, the counterpart of Zeus, the conqueror exclaimed with pride—*My Grandfather!*

"In an adjoining gallery is that red onyx Chimera, which lived through the reign of many Pharaohs."

The Pall Mall Magazine

Vol. LI
No. 240

April · 1913

The Great Day in 1920

By Captain S. W. Beeman

Illustrated by Charles Pears

The following narrative, though cast in the form of fiction—as all such attempts to see into the future must necessarily be—carries all the weight of a carefully-balanced article since it is written by a military expert who has given much study to the problem of human flight. Every indication, not forgetting the recent international declarations on the question of armaments, points to the fact that the next great contest will be decided literally in the air—and in less than ten years, the author thinks.

THERE had been as yet no declaration of war, but every man and woman in the country had known long ago that it had to come. England had wakened up in the last ten years: she had maintained her naval supremacy. Compulsory service had been introduced as a result of a war scare in 1915. She had now an Army of 1,000,000 men, the pick of the country, well-trained, well officered.

She spoke with deep affection of her Navy, of her Army—but the apple of her eye was the Royal Flying Corps, consisting of 4,000 aeroplanes of all classes, manned by pilots who had been trained under all trying climatic changes.

When would it be—the first great battle in the air?

Aerial Navies grappling in the central blue.

Tennyson had written sixty years ago and more. Was his prophetic vision about to be fulfilled? Already the elements, the aerial navies, were in being. It could not be long before they would be driven to try conclusions.

And now "the Great Day" had dawned. Barely six hours had elapsed since the Ambassador had left our

"His hydroplane soon caught up with several monoplanes scouting over the Channel"

shores and yet all was in readiness. The Navy was coaled up and cleared for action. The Army was mobilised. A mighty Aerial Fleet was guarding our shores—eight divisions of 500 aeroplanes were distributed as shown below:

STATION	COMPOSITION
	No. 1 Division.
	Section "A"
Attached to Fighting Line of the Aerial Fleet	250 Two seated Air Scouts built for detailed reconnaissance
	Section "B"
Attached to Fighting Line of the Aerial Fleet	250 Monoplanes seating one man to be used for rapid survey of enemy's position Speed 100 miles per hour.
	No. 2 Division
	Section "A"
Attached to Royal Field and Heavy Artillery	250 Range-finding Aeroplanes to co-operate with the Artillery Speed 60 miles per hour
	Section "B"
Attached to the Navy	250 Aero-hydroplanes for Naval Scouting and communication with the Admiralty Speed 90 miles per hour
STATIONED AT	Nos. 3—8 Divisions
Dover	No. 3 Division
"	" 4 "
Plymouth	" 5 "
Newcastle	" 6 "
Liverpool	" 7 "
London	" 8 "

All armed Aeroplanes—carrying maxims and patent bomb dropping machines[1]. These 3,000 aeroplanes in six Divisions formed the actual fighting line.
Speed 80 to 90 miles per hour.

The entire Aerial Fleet fitted with high frequency telephones having a working range of 300 miles.

[1] These machines were invented by a young engineer officer in the Army. Each aeroplane was fitted with an aneroid barometer, a speedometer and a wind-gauge enabling the pilot to calculate his height from the ground, the speed of his aeroplane and that of the wind. All he had to do was to set his sights attached to the machine, steer his aeroplane over the target, release the trigger—and the flight being mathematically planned, the shell seldom failed to hit the mark.

General Beaumont, the Commandant of the Royal Flying Corps, made Dover his head-quarters, as it was off this coast that the first important encounter would in all probability take place. Nos. 3 and 4 Divisions, plus their complement of two-seated scouts, or 100-mile-an-hour monoplanes, the whole under the command of Colonel Raleigh, R.F. Corps, were close at hand and ready for immediate action.

The morning was dull but mild, with a faint westerly wind blowing, these scouts were hovering heavenward over the calm Channel waters, eagerly watching to get the first glimpse of any sign of movement on the part of the enemy. But the news General Beaumont longed for would come from the other side of the Channel, by hydroplane. Three or four times during the last half-hour he had scanned the ocean for some break in the waters, but not a movement was visible in the silvery sea.

For fifteen years General Beaumont had made the Fourth Arm his life's study. Imagination, foresight, coupled with sound common sense, had opened up the possibilities of the future; ideas had suggested themselves to him in quick succession, and he had fostered them until they developed and became positive. Trained in a hard school, he was a keen observer, a searching student of human nature, he gathered round him men of iron nerve and vivid imagination to assist him in his preparations for the great war to come.

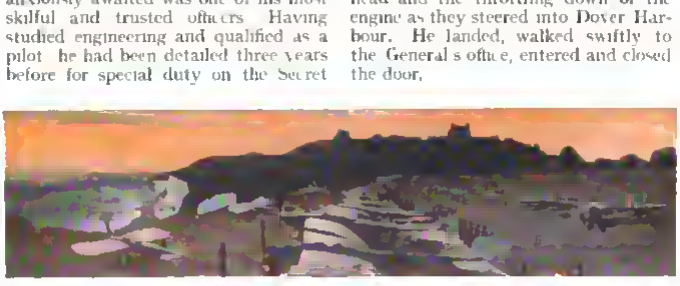
The scout whose appearance he so anxiously awaited was one of his most skilful and trusted officers. Having studied engineering and qualified as a pilot, he had been detailed three years before for special duty on the Secret Intelligence Staff, and the information he had gleaned in (and above) the Hostile Country had been invaluable to England. The General had the greatest confidence in him, and in the success of his daring attempt to obtain the plan of campaign.

True to his word, while flying over the enemy's capital during the night, he had actually managed to tap a wireless message conveying an outline of the general idea for the invasion.

Half-an-hour after his haul he landed on the banks of a river, took his monoplane to pieces, threw it into the stream, boarded his hydroplane, that had been waiting for him and kept in readiness for weeks past by one of the men of the Royal Flying Corps, and was soon heading for the General's head-quarters at Dover. Clear of the river he looked north and south in the dawning light, and a feeling of safety crept over him. Away on the horizon, standing out against the haze, he could distinguish his escort of battleships, soon he caught up with several monoplanes which were scouting over the Channel.

The first orders from the Admiralty had been that the passage from the mouth of the river to Dover was to be held at all costs until General Beaumont telephoned that he no longer required it. Overwrought by the perilous work of the previous night, soothed by the soft throb of the motor, he sank into a deep sleep.

Half-an-hour later he was wakened by the ringing of a bell at the harbour-head and the throttling down of the engine as they steered into Dover Harbour. He landed, walked swiftly to the General's office, entered and closed the door.



"On the ... [illegible]

From a cigar-case with a double lining he produced a thin dispatch which he handed to the General

General Idea

War has been found to be inevitable

The Fleet will concentrate north east of the Island of Shetland and endeavour to gain supremacy in the Irish Channel This being accomplished no mercantile ships must be allowed into any English port. . . The 1st and 2nd Aerial Fleets will fly to Dover The 1st will be responsible for safeguarding the invading troops, the 2nd will destroy London with bombs No definite orders can be given to the Army until the result of the aerial battle is known

A sigh of relief came from the General "This is a magnificent haul he said "How did you come by it"

The scout smiled "It was quite simple I heard that orders had been received and that there was to be a Council of War at 10 30 last evening All I had to do was to tune my instrument to the same wave length as their official telephone and to take down the instructions issued to the Commanders in shorthand

"And you got away without being discovered"

"As far as I am aware sir"

"H'm What time is it"

"It is now 6 30 sir

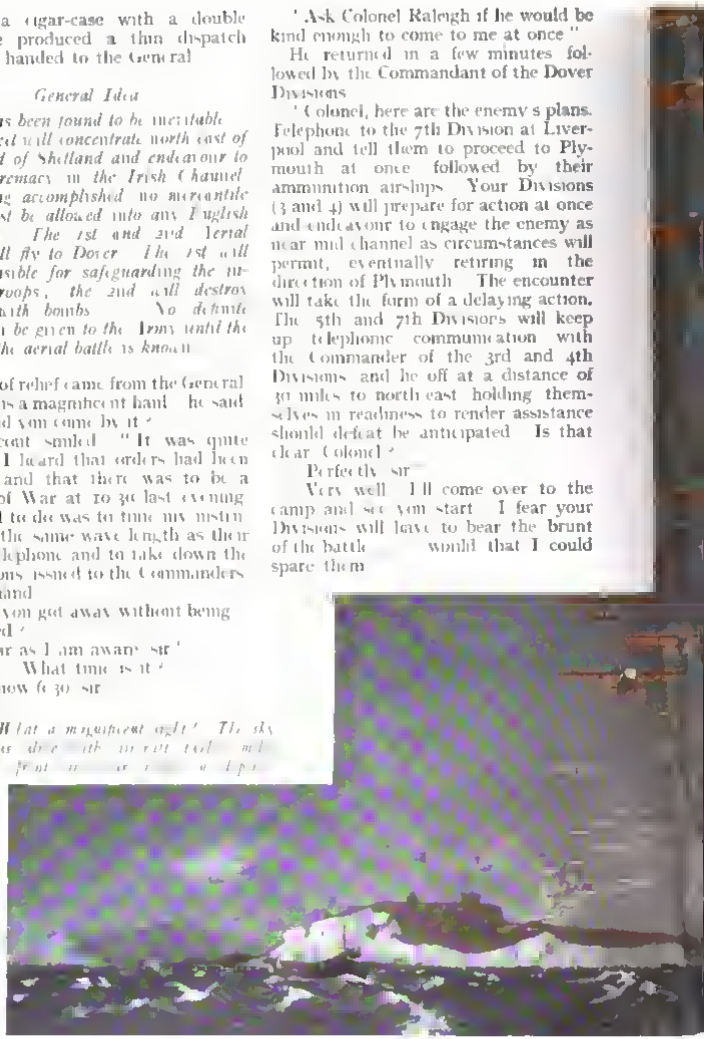
'Ask Colonel Raleigh if he would be kind enough to come to me at once"

He returned in a few minutes followed by the Commandant of the Dover Divisions

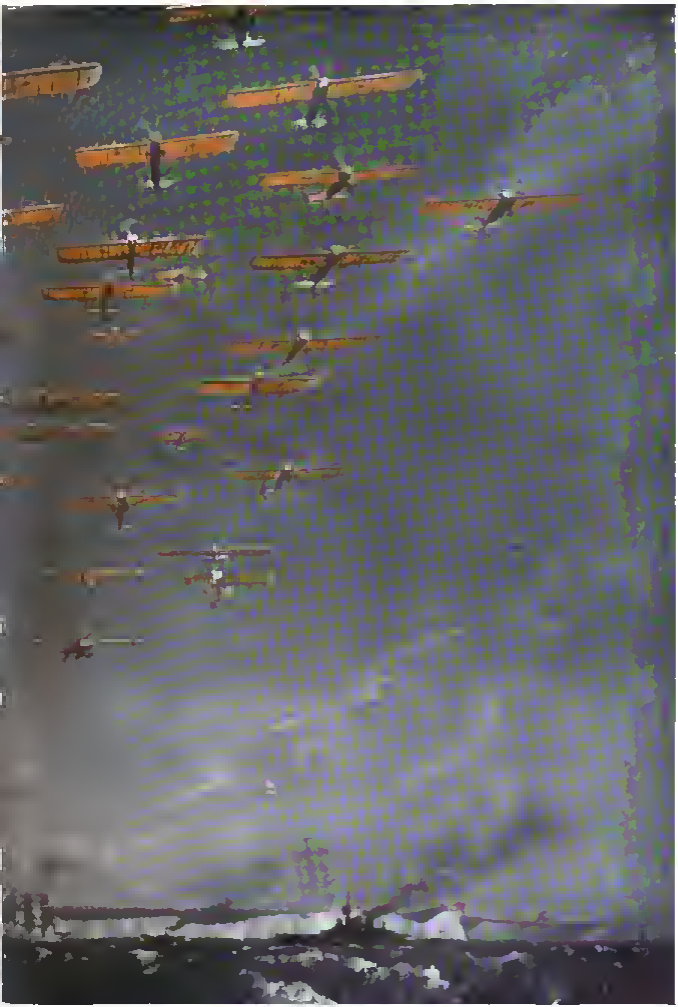
'Colonel, here are the enemy's plans. Telephone to the 7th Division at Liverpool and tell them to proceed to Plymouth at once followed by their ammunition airships Your Divisions (3 and 4) will prepare for action at once and endeavour to engage the enemy as near mid channel as circumstances will permit, eventually retiring in the direction of Plymouth The encounter will take the form of a delaying action. The 5th and 7th Divisions will keep up telephonic communication with the Commander of the 3rd and 4th Divisions and he off at a distance of 30 miles to north east holding themselves in readiness to render assistance should defeat be anticipated Is that clear Colonel'

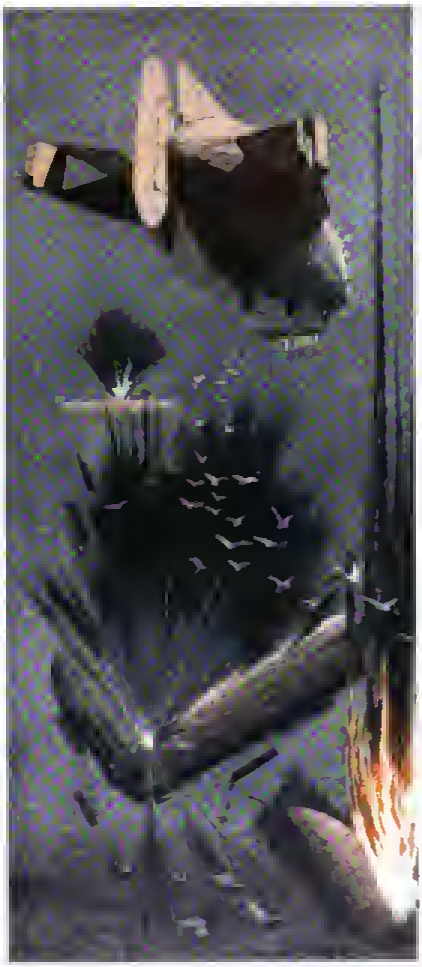
Perfectly sir

Very well I'll come over to the camp and see you start I fear your Divisions will have to bear the brunt of the battle would that I could spare them



"What a magnificent sight! The sky was dotted with aircraft and in front of us . . .





"They are ready, and, believe me, they will be proud of the distinction."

Above, on the grassy slopes of Dover Cliffs five long lines of curious-looking erections were drawn up in battle array. For all the world they looked like hundreds of skeletons, with great flat awnings of membranous material and queer shape stretched taut on light frames stayed with wire. In their spidery appearance they had the remote semblance of reaping-machines. All the metal-work and planes were painted sky-blue; there was no bright brass or burnished steel to catch the ever-eager eye of the scout; the five Section Commanders carried small silk Union Jacks at one end and the Divisional Flag at the other. They were all self-starters.

One after another the pilots and crews climbed into their cars. A bugle sounded, followed instantly by a loud drouing and then a faint throbbing of the almost noiseless motors.

The air scouts had been gone five minutes and were now nearly out of sight.

There was another snort, and the propellers doubled their speed, looking like a line of haloes. Another bugle, a ten-yards run, and the sky was visibly darkened as if by a cloud of locusts. Two hundred aeroplanes soared swiftly and steadily into the sunlight.

This was repeated five times. A shake of the hand and the two soldiers parted. Colonel Raleigh mounted his monoplane, a flash, and it leaped into the air in the wake of the great aerial fleet.

Colonel Raleigh turned to

his chart and then to his compass in quick succession. A few rapid calculations showed him he was steering too far west. Taking the telephone, he called up the section commanders: "Course, 76 degrees; speed, 50 miles per hour; altitude, 4,500 feet; frontage, 12 miles; interval between lines, 1,600 yards."

The Fleet extended from the centre, and rose slowly from 3,000 feet to the altitude ordered.

What a magnificent sight! Had there ever been a naval review or march past to equal it? The sky was alive with aircraft twelve miles in front and four miles in depth.

The telephone rang with a short, sharp buzz: "From Officer Commanding Scouts, Square 18. Special Aircraft Chart. No enemy in sight."

A glance at the chart showed the Colonel that he was too near the enemy's shores to fight to the best advantage.

"The Fleet will retire. Course, 255 degrees; speed, 30 miles."

Each aeroplane turned about almost on its own base.

The white cliffs of Dover were again visible, and as the landscape opened up afresh, many a pilot conjured up dreams of the past and wondered why the spring-lit shore seemed so inviting, so desirous.

They were soon banished by the sound of firing that broke the silent air. The smooth purr of a maxim gun warned them that the scouts were in touch with the enemy.

Telephones buzzed. Orders were issued: "Nos. 1 and 4 Sections. Course, 105 degrees; speed, 50 miles; altitude, 5,500 feet; clear for action. No. 5 Section: Course, 135 degrees; stand off at 15 miles."

The firing grew more distinct. In the dim distance a scout could be seen toppling over and over into the sea.

The struggle for aerial supremacy had commenced and the key to the situation was height.

"Orders!" called the General down the telephone. "Altitude, 7,000 feet. Full elevation plus auxiliary lifting propellers." Our first three lines towered upwards like rockets, clearing the enemy by 400 feet. The fourth line, seeing they were out-manœuvred, turned about, and increased speed to seventy miles.

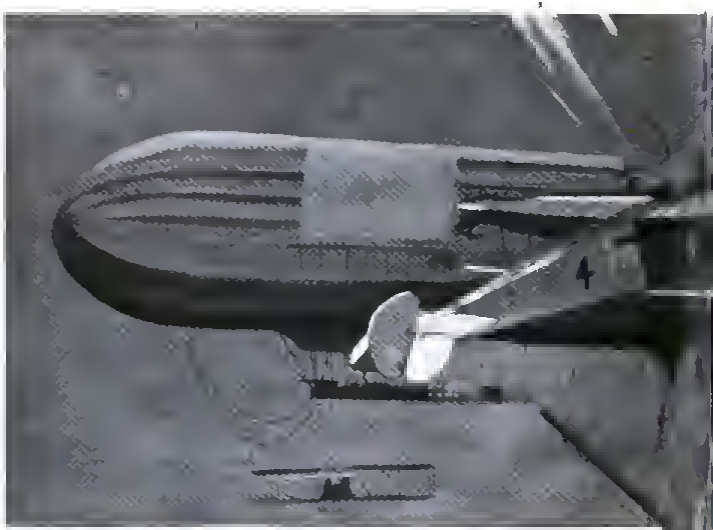
A general fusillade ensued. Those angels of destruction sought to kill, burn or suffocate each other; the sky seemed to have burst. Three lines of the enemy's reserve that had followed in rear now came up and succeeded in over-riding our top sections. Three tiers of action were now engaged in the frenzied fight. The lowest and the middle tiers, finding that it was impossible to climb where the air was thick with hundreds of aeroplanes, increased to top speed, thus clearing some of the bombs and bullets that sped whistling seawards through space.

Discipline was lost, the success of the day rested on the individual pluck of the men. Now and then a wail rose up from some poor pilot as the grip of death grasped him from his struggle for the Supremacy of the Air. Enemy and foe frequently crashed headlong into each other; then would follow a momentary stillness, and a swish which told that a mangled mass of men and machinery had been torn from the terrors of the battle in the air.

Several aeroplanes caught fire and panic-stricken pilots were seen to jump overboard, preferring to face death by drowning to being burnt alive in the air. One poor fellow, with a leg blown to pieces by a bomb, fell from his car and landed on a passing aeroplane. He lay wedged between two stays on the top of the plane until after the battle, and when he was found his reason had left him, and he fortunately only survived a few hours.

Dense clouds of smoke and long tongues of flame mounted up. Such an unequal contest could not be endured. Many pilots were losing their reason. The roar and crackle of bursting bombs mingled with the shrieks of the dying; it was diabolical—detestable; the task was too great even for Englishmen to tackle.

Telephones were useless now in such a din. A signal ran up on the Commanders aeroplane, and the two Divisions volplaned to 3,000 feet, steering for Plymouth.



"A crash and a thrilling grinding sound—an aeroplane, out of all control, was lurid volume of flame—the airship

The enemy re formed in lines and followed some two miles in rear They were no doubt expecting our reinforcements and were not anxious to be caught in extended order. No 5 Section had almost been forgotten Colonel Raleigh called up and ordered them to do what they could to cover his retirement The enemy's bearing and formation were given to the Commander, who decided on an enfilade charge on the first two lines He had the fastest section in the two Divisions and in many cases the most efficient pilots He changed his course 45 degrees so as to form a right angle with the enemy's line of advance His object was to come across the enemy crossing his lines in a downward direction, 200 yards in front, and about 150 feet above him Such a movement if it comes in the nature of a surprise and is properly carried out at a high speed, causes a propeller-blast equal to a gale of wind with a speed of 120 miles an hour, with the result that it is almost impossible for an aeroplane to maintain its balance

The charge was commenced A hundred aeroplanes in Indian file appeared through the smoke that still hung about the Channel, tearing the air at a speed of over eighty miles an hour

No! the enemy had not seen them—only a thousand yards more and success was assured—a second later they were fired on by the enemy's left flank. The third plane of the file fell headlong to the sea followed by two more from the centre, but it was too late for the enemy to change direction or manœuvre.

The file tore along the line at exactly the correct height and distance. Aeroplane after aeroplane in the enemy's lines swayed and creaked, pitched and tossed as so many corks in a storm-swept sea. The air disturbance and displacement was so intense that it was impossible to avoid being capsized. One after another they swung over or dived down in their efforts to right

buried headlong into an airship. A terrific explosion, accompanied by a crumbled and crashed earthwards.

themselves For a few moments the sky looked as if it were filled with autumn leaves Of the enemy's first line only six remained

Colonel Raleigh had been lying off to watch the effect of the charge and now ordered the section to follow in rear of the main body This little manœuvre delayed the enemy sufficiently to enable the exhausted divisions to get well on their way to Plymouth before the enemy could continue the pursuit

On arrival off Plymouth the 5th and 7th Divisions came to the assistance of the force that had done so well and suffered so heavily and after a battle lasting for an hour and twenty minutes the enemy were driven off in a westerly direction, and followed for several hours

Their losses were calculated at 1 860

Whilst this battle is in progress, we must turn to Dover and see what has happened there

General Beaumont was anxiously awaiting news of the airship invasion. He paced up and down the path that bordered on his office and occasionally glanced up at a small airship (the only one in our Fleet) lying peacefully at anchor close to the ground. On either side of the car of the airship were some fifteen to twenty cages of carrier-pigeons, "one of the General's little cranks," his friends often said as they watched these birds at feeding-time. Every day they were released at noon and immediately the cage doors were opened they would fly off to a small airship that lay at anchor, some three miles away They were seen to land on the top and there take their food The meal finished they would fly round until dusk and return to their cages. Many friends had asked why these birds were fed on the top of an airship, but no two of them got the same answer. To-day they were to learn the correct reply

A scout appeared in the sky and alighted quite close to the General

"Airships reported in Square 16 E. Service Map, steering due west." The pilot saluted and mounted his machine. A faint swish and he rose from the ground and was soon out of sight beyond a row of tall trees.

"Are you ready, Jones?"

"Yes, sir."

Taking his seat in the car of the airship, the General issued orders: "Course 310 degrees; altitude, 6,000 feet; speed, 55 miles per hour."

The soft smooth drone of the engine had a soothing effect, and as they sailed through the air the General surveyed the country that lay before him. Forty minutes passed, when his attention was arrested by a faint sound of firing carried in on the easterly breeze, followed by further evidence that fighting was in progress somewhere to the north. "Course 350 degrees; speed, 65 miles an hour," was ordered. With a swinging movement the little ship changed her course. Five minutes now drew the curtain from the battle. The enemy's airships in big numbers were just visible in the dim distance, and some thousand feet below tents could be distinguished. Masses of troops moved from the camp in a southerly direction; the airships were dropping bombs on them as they marched. Occasionally a puff of smoke would burst among the troops, and as it cleared, men could be seen scattering in all directions, leaving behind many brave fellows to tell of the slaughter that was taking place.

"Full speed astern," shouted the General, followed by "Course, 250; speed, 10 miles." He now lay off at 5,000 yards. The pigeons were taken out of their cages and small glass tubes were secured firmly to their feet. When all was ready, forty were released in batches of ten. It was now nearly feeding-time; they looked round for the airship and flew off at a terrific speed. One showed signs of wanting to return to the cage and was promptly shot. The glass tubes attached to their feet contained a very high explosive, and as the birds alighted on the top of one or the other of the enemy's airships in quest of food, bursts of blue flame were seen, followed by clouds of lurid smoke.

Many airships were seen to explode simultaneously, cars and men were blown to pieces, others toppled and fell helplessly to the earth. "Useful birds, pigeons!" remarked the General.

Horrified by the havoc caused by the unseen enemy, the Fleet retired, but only for a short distance. Reinforcements had arrived; two more long lines broke through the haze, and the entire hostile Fleet turned about and continued the advance. The General called up the 8th Division, but got no reply. "Full speed ahead!" he called. Ten airships of his own class were now trying to outflank him. Two or three shots whistled through the air, thirty more birds were released, and they flew off to a section that was moving slowly south. All on board the General's airship were too busy at their respective posts to watch the effect, but after the fight a prisoner admitted that nine airships were blown up by them. Three of the General's crew were wounded, but having ten miles the better of the pursuers they were successful in standing off far enough to avoid serious damage.

"Firing ahead," shouted the look-out man, and as the General looked over the side he could just distinguish the 8th Division advancing and increasing their height to their utmost. The enemy's escort to the airships had come in touch with them some miles back, and were still doing their level best to retard the attack; but being outnumbered by four to one they were compelled to fall back on the airships. Fifteen minutes brought the 8th Division in touch with the airships that had now formed in four circles at 10,000 feet.

Our aeroplanes came under a very heavy fire. Fifteen to twenty crumpled up and fell. The struggle was growing keener, and at every hundred feet the airships found that the aeroplanes were gaining the whip hand. Two airships exploded; the air pressure at this great altitude had diminished to such an extent that the gas inside stretched the silk until it burst. Our aeroplanes had to bear off, climbing in long spiral figures in quick succession. The top ones could be seen to break away from the figure at full speed, to circle round one or the

other of the enemy's divisions, dropping bombs as they went A burst of flame told its story, 200 men were hurled head-first into space, some hanging on to fragments of the car, while others turned over and over in their deathly descent.

Time after time amidst flame and bullets the enemy endeavoured to gain the advantage of height. Again an aeroplane would sweep swiftly over its silky surface, releasing a messenger of death that tore its opponent into a thousand pieces. The smoke grew denser, the fusillade more furious, adding to the horrors of the battle, on which the history of nearly half the world would turn. The shrieks and heart-rending groans of the wounded and dying rent the air.

The troops, who were huddled together in the airships like so many sheep at a market, were quite helpless. In many cases they opened rapid rifle-fire on single aeroplanes, but as a role more damage was done to their own side than ours. Hundreds of them lay in the bottom of the cars, killed and wounded by our special aerial maxim-gun fire. So closely packed they offered an admirable target. On both sides death came to many a man as a happy release.

A crash, a sickening grinding sound — an aeroplane out of all control was hurled headlong into an airship A terrific explosion, accompanied by a lurid volume of flame and suffocating smoke—the airship crumpled and crashed earthwards The pilot and doubtless many other poor fellows were released from the infernal contest, waged in the name of King and country

General Beaumont stood off some miles, commanding, when possible, his plucky pilots He was in touch with the 5th and 7th Divisions, who were on their way to stand by if needed. It was now 12.50, and war had only commenced with the break of day. News came in by telephone that two squadrons of our Navy had succeeded in engaging and defeating the enemy's first line, capturing three battleships, four first-class cruisers and two transports carrying 12,000 infantry of the invading land force. This news was most satisfactory. A minute later the General threw the telephone receiver on the table and swore violently between his teeth He could hardly believe his own ears; and yet it must be true, coming as it did direct from the War Office.

One section of the enemy's airship escort, finding they could do but little in the uneven contest, had steered for London, and put into execution orders that had been issued to follow on the landing of the troops at Harrow. Breaking up into small parties, they had evaded the London Division, and succeeded in dropping some petrol celluloid bombs. The report went on to say that London was on fire in three or more places—Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament, Piccadilly from Hyde Park Corner to the Circus had been completely gutted. All efforts of the united fire brigades were of no avail. So combustible was this new mixture of petrol and vegetable fibrine that thousands of people had been burnt to death in the houses and the streets.

The enemy had been driven off, every possible means to check the spread of the fire being resorted to. The General swore again "So these are the people who, not satisfied in waging war against our men, must needs try to burn our women!" There should be but little quarter for such a race!

The air grew moist, which made it difficult for the airships to maintain their present great height. Slowly the increased weight of the water began to tell on the much-depleted envelopes The climatic change was greatly in our favour, one by one pilots succeeded in attaining the aerial ascendancy for which they had striven so strenuously. As the airships descended they were forced to abandon their circular fighting formation for one of wider extension The fighting continued for another thirty minutes, at the end of which the airships had fallen to 5,600 feet—only 130 remained afloat out of 500. To prolong the fight was utterly useless, and their Commander hoisted the white flag amid the cheers of our victorious fleet.

News had now come in of another naval victory off the east coast of Scotland, and the complete success of the aeroplane battle at Plymouth

As the General swooped silently to

the earth, his eyes fell on the débris of the battle; in places the grass fields were hardly visible; masses of machinery mingled with writhing men met the eye

"Peace!" murmured the General "For its price may I be pardoned."

After deducting the losses in these two great battles it was found that we still had 2,840 aeroplanes, plus 80 aeroplanes and 130 airships captured from the enemy, as against their 470 aeroplanes only.

Our supremacy in the air was comparatively far greater than it had been at the commencement of hostilities. On receipt of the news of the defeat of the Aerial Fleet in the enemy's capital, the Civil Minister of War expressed a desire to continue the invasion on land and water. He argued that they had an Army of 5,000,000 men and that England had only 1,000,000.

They could undoubtedly hold the Channel with their massed Fleet, and then land a force powerful enough to defeat so small an Army. The Commander-in-Chief admitted that the War Minister's suggestions were quite sound, but maintained that the advent of the aeroplane had negatived the necessity for superiority of the land forces, and was of the opinion that they would be well advised if they sought for peace.

Before the Council rose a dispatch was delivered by a British aviator demanding an immediate agreement to pay an indemnity of £250,000,000 and to give England the power to exercise certain restrictions in questions of Naval and Aerial Fleet programmes of the future. Six hours were allowed for acceptance of the terms, in default of which war would be carried into the enemy's country. England had command of the air, and could destroy every town and man in the country. What was the good of offering further resistance?

The terms of peace were accepted unconditionally.

* * * * *

Captain Benson, of the Royal Flying Corps, turned restlessly in his sleep, yawned and opened his eyes with a start. Jumping out of bed, with both hands to his head he rushed to the window.

He stood motionless in the centre of the room. No! no! it was just a dream! It was 1913, not 1920! Everyday facts, petty details of daily life, surged through his mind. Now he remembered a discussion of the night before with a brother officer, in which it was admitted that England was years behind other Powers in aviation.

Germany had fifteen to twenty Zeppelins, a hundred smaller airships and a large number of aeroplanes, and, what was more important, money to encourage aeronautical industry and create competition. Not satisfied with collecting £400,000 for her Zeppelin Fund, she had just closed her National Aviation Fund for £300,000.

In France the three leading journals had recently raised £250,000 for a similar object. By the end of the year she would have 1,000 aeroplanes attached to her Army.

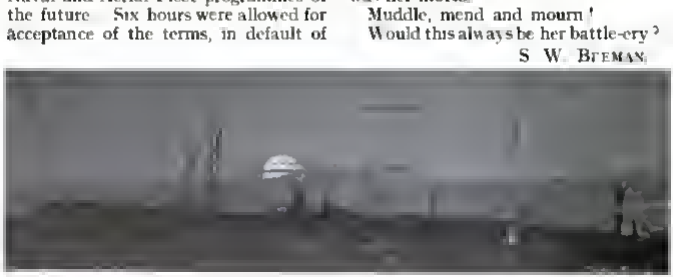
Poor sleepy old England, swamped in security for a century, what was she doing for aviation?

"Muddling"—just muddling! That was her motto.

Muddle, mend and mourn!

Would this always be her battle-cry?

S. W. Bteman.



The Mer-maid

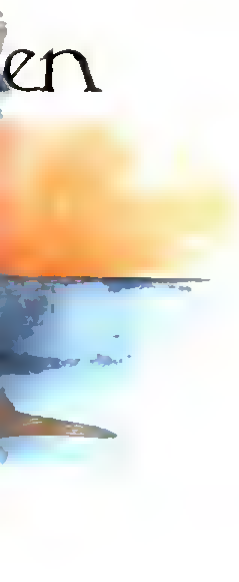
By Dora Sigerson Shorter.

I DREW her out of the wave
High up on the windy shore.
Oh, never a fish I caught
So fair in my net before.

And white she was as the foam
That flies from the storm whipped sea.
I held her close to my heart
Where at rest she would not be.

Swift she turned her east and west
Slow she turned her north and south.
The salt from her weed brown hair
Stung bitter upon my mouth

I drew her close to my heart,
And I kissed her wave wet cheek.
Till fear went out of her eyes
At the love my lips did speak.



I CLAD her in robes of silk,
I shod her in shoon of gold
And jewel and gem I found
For her slender hands to hold.

FULL many a priceless gift
That my nets had brought to me,
From grasp of the restless dead
Who move in deep of the sea.

AND I sang to make her glad
And I laughed to see her play
As I shook my nets in the sun,
Out in the golden day.

BUT alack! for joy too brief—
There rolled and twinkling fell,
From twist and twine of the net,
A marked and cursèd shell.

SHE held it high in her hand,
I knew she was lost to me.
She laid her ear to its pearl
And heard the call of the sea.

AND soon for a hedge-grove flower
She followed me by the hill,
Where call of the sea was lost,
And tail of the wave was still

SHE heard the cry of the sea,
And she thrust me from her side,
And out to its cold embrace
She flew like a willing bride.

AND long in my garden fair
She laughed in her strange delight
At swaying of roses red,
At perfume of lilies white.

AND I heard the laugh of the wave
Far off on the windy shore
Oh! never a dream I caught
So fair in my net before.

DORA SIGERSON SHORTER

THE PARLIAMENT OF SANTA CLAUS

By Philip Gibbs

Our Special Correspondent in Fairyland

Illustrated by Charles Robinson

THE spirit of unrest, which has caused so many strikes, industrial conflicts and social upheavals among mortal men invaded Fairyland during the autumn of 1913 and reached a severe crisis just before Christmas.

It was the Wicked Uncle who began it. Conspiring secretly with Mr. Bill Stickers, who has never yet been prosecuted in spite of all the warnings of the police, he plastered the magic walls of Fairyland with enormous posters printed with revolutionary war cries in big black letters:

DOWN WITH CHRISTMAS!
NO MORE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS!
WE WON'T HAVE HOME RULE FOR CHILDREN!
FAIRIES WON'T BE SLAVES!
DEATH TO HUMBUG AND SENTIMENT!
VOTE FOR SELFISHNESS AND COMMON SENSE!

The Wicked Uncle held committee meetings in the Blue Bird Restaurant, addressed a mass meeting of revolting fairies outside the pearly gates of Santa Claus' and undertook to produce a general strike of goblins and hobgoblins

Puss in Boots

nixies and pixies and all the fairy workmen who were at first to erect the [illegible] costless [illegible] short [illegible] tied up in a clockwork motor car from which he jumped with a double somersault and [illegible] shouted

"Shape Beauty Heroes or no!" Peter Pan heralded his approach by a skull Cock-a-doodle-doo and flew into the top window of the Parliament House He wore his Napoleonic uniform in honour of the important occasion Columbine promptly tied up the floor of the House kissed her hand to Santa Claus, and floated like a gossamer to her seat on the Right Harlequin played Hide and Seek with the Home Policeman behind the Speaker's chair, and the Speaker himself the Right Hon Sambo Golliwog

The Right Hon Sambo Golliwogg

sat as silent as usual rolling the whites of his eyes

The Bad Fairy

The Bad Fairy was soon to be in full flow and—though with the Wicked Uncle the Demon King the New Woman, the Nut and the Spectral Child who were members of the Opposition while Puss in Boots Shock headed Peter Robinson Crusoe Aladdin Dick Whittington and the Cat took their places on the side of the angels which was to the right of the kingly throne of the Fairy Queen

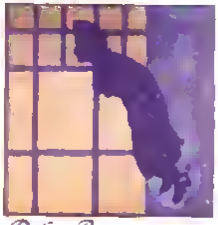
Robinson Crusoe

The last arrival to this historic gathering was Pierrot As he entered he took off his high white hat which revealed the black skull cap above his pallid face and gazing upon the assembly with lack-lustre eyes he heaved a deep and piteous sigh.

Aladdin

'Where is the moon' he said in his melancholy voice.

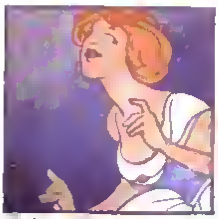
'Where is my dear beautiful broom?' Then he burst into tears at the sight of Columbine who was



Peter Pan

raised his monocle for a moment and gazed scornfully at the Clown who was in the act of swallowing his poker. 'That the world of men is getting too wise to be duped by the old fantasies of fairyland. In the days when Santa Claus first invented by Yuletide elves as I think myself — the simplicity of men was so great that they could put away their anxieties, leave business, their quarrels, their mischief for a little while, and wallow in an orgy of sentiment and superstition. They believed in fairies, strange as it may appear to these of us who know otherwise; they had faith in the virtues of generosity and abnegation and good fellowship, and as the author I remit the Yule Log the belief in old tales and legends. They put back a good deal of good cheer, not wisely but too well, and they delighted to foster the laughing Heathen Man. Mr Speaker, as you know, all that has been changed.

There was a loud murmur of dissent from Dick Whittington's seat. 'Pat Pan what I usually leave on the hearth. He'd have a little drop of whisky and a bite of mince pie. Pursuing its theme it took off one of



Columbine

Dick Whittington

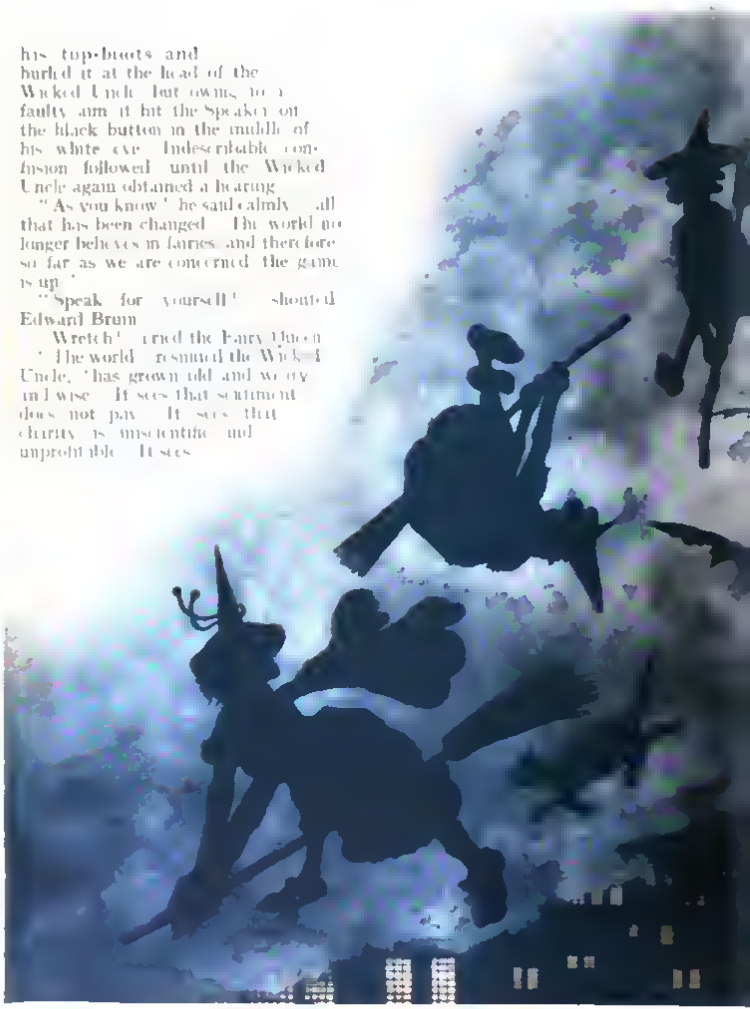
his top-boots and hurled it at the head of the Wicked Uncle. But owing, no doubt, to a faulty aim it hit the Speaker on the black button in the middle of his white eye. Indescribable confusion followed until the Wicked Uncle again obtained a hearing.

"As you know," he said calmly, "all that has been changed. The world no longer believes in fairies, and therefore so far as we are concerned the game is up."

"Speak for yourself!" shouted Edward Brum.

"Wretch!" cried the Fairy Queen.

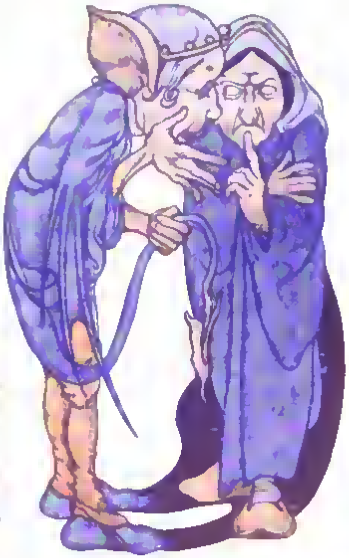
"The world," resumed the Wicked Uncle, "has grown old and weary and wise. It sees that sentiment does not pay. It sees that charity is unscientific and unprofitable. It sees



that the competition of modern life is too keen to permit of giving expensive presents to greedy children, and to admit of all those needless expenses which are piled up in the Christmas holidays The world—Mr Speaker—has arrived at an age of truth, and has put away the old hypocrisy of loving one's neighbours for one week in the year and hating them for the rest of the year, the old stupidity of peace and good-will, when life is warfare and the survival of the fittest, the old simplicity which could laugh and rejoice around the Yule Log, when there was no truce to the misery and sufferings of humanity Do not let us deceive ourselves, gentlemen

The Clown climbed up on a six-wheel motor car from which he jumped with a double somersault

The spirit of Christmas is [illegible] in the Pantomime. It has been [illegible] by some [illegible] thing about [illegible] expectations [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]



The Bad Fairy was seen to be in close consultation with the Demon King

[illegible] in the [illegible] I catch a [illegible] I whisper [illegible] my [illegible] of love [illegible] lemon I sing my love-songs to her so sweetly and so sadly that she stays with me a while before fluttering away on her gossamer wings. If [illegible] poor Pierrot will die of a broken heart, and be among the withered [illegible] of dead hopes. Alas, poor Pierrot!

"Abolish Christmas!" [illegible] the Clown, turning head over heels from the Speaker's chair. [illegible] sense! Also fiddle-de-dee! What will the little children do without the Clown? Who will [illegible] if I do not grin through the [illegible] collar with my [illegible] 'Slap Bang!' Here we are again! What is the use of [illegible] and twisting my [illegible] double somersault if there is to be no Christmas? Oh dear, oh dear! I shall have to ask myself all my own riddles!"

"Down with Christmas!" [illegible] the Demon King. "Never again will I be hissed by the children in the stalls. Never again will I slink away from the magic wand of the Fairy Queen. Magic wand indeed! It is only a common piece of stick. [illegible] Death to all [illegible] and Fairy Queens!" [illegible] a [illegible] [illegible] death!"

A [illegible] the Mad Hatter [illegible] the Wicked Uncle's [illegible] himself an appearance [illegible] importance. "As the dear [illegible]" he began, "in-[illegible] the very Dickens. [illegible] when I am [illegible] Santa [illegible] The Bad Fairy [illegible] company.

[illegible] by the Wicked Uncle, who pulled his monocle from the Mad Hatter and began to make another speech.

Where's my coat? beautiful moon?

"Christmas is a hollow fraud," he said, "Nobody wants it Everybody hates it—except those who batten on its sentiment. It is an excuse for blackmail by poor relations, whining beggars, schoolboys who expect tips from bachelor uncles, tradesmen who demand Christmas boxes for doing the work by which they earn their wages, and all such parasites. Let's get rid of it before it gets rid of us"

So far the orators of revolt had had most to say for themselves, but now Peter Pan sprang to his feet and was greeted with great applause from all his friends on the Right, before he made a brilliant and impassioned speech. "I have heard that the spirit of Christmas is dead! What folly is that? The spirit of Christmas is the spirit of youth, and youth never dies and never grows old I will tell you of the things I know Every year I leave the island of the Little White Bird and go to London, flying over the housetops, to visit the Darling family But sometimes I am tempted to stop at other windows, because behind so many of them there are other Darling families, with mothers bending over the beds where the children are tucked up, with fathers stealing on tiptoe out of rooms where they have put the gifts of Santa Claus into stockings hung up on the bed-rails I hear the children whispering to each other before they go to sleep. 'Christmas is coming!' they say, 'old Santa Claus will soon be here! We shall see Peter Pan again! How funny it is that he never grows up!'— In all the streets over which I fly there are crowds of people outside the shops Although Wendy is waiting for me, I stop to look into their faces. Some of them are tired faces, some of them are pinched and pallid, some of them are marked with the claws of old Father Time, but in their eyes there is a shining light It is the Spirit of Christmas. I play the eavesdropper and listen to their words They have all been buying presents—pretty girls for their lovers, husbands for their wives, fathers and mothers for their children, schoolboys and schoolgirls for the men and women whom they call 'pater' and 'mater' None of them have ever enough money to buy all they want to buy for those they love, but however much money they have, no one ever buys anything for himself That is

the great law of Christmas. No one must think of himself! And yet their laughter rings out while they count up all the people they are bound to remember, and divide them into the last of the shillings that lie in their pockets. Old and young, they are all like children in the great nursery of life. Mr. Speaker, sir, I have seen old bald-headed fellows chortling like small boys at the games which they have bought for their grandsons. I have peeped into Christmas windows and seen fathers and mothers playing with their children's toys as though there were no butchers' bills to pay and no stockings to mend, and no grey hairs upon grown-up heads. For a little while the Spirit of Christmas has given youth to them, and the forgetfulness of youth. On Christmas Day there is more than one Peter Pan in the world. There are thousands of Peters in love with thousands of Wendies, and for a little while they play the game of make-believe, and pretend to be pirates, and go hunting bears beneath the table-cloth, or listen to old tales which are better than the truth. I call out to them, 'Do you believe in fairies?' and there is a great clapping from men and women whose hearts have never grown up. . . . I deny that the world has become old and wise and weary. I deny that it has lost its faith in fairies. I deny that it is tired of Christmas. Every human heart, however withered and stale it may seem during part of the year, renews its youth when the Christmas bells are ringing and when Santa Claus comes with a sledge full of gifts, and when selfishness is changed into unselfishness by the magic wand of the Fairy Queen. . . . Hurrah for Christmas! Votes for children! Long live sentiment!"

Peter Pan, after this long and eloquent speech, rose from his place, flew gently above the heads of the assembly, perched on the high window sill, and uttered a shrill and joyous "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

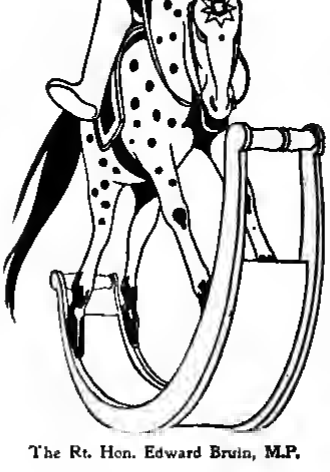
Tremendous applause burst forth from both sides of the House. The Clown turned three double somersaults, Dick Whittington's cat purred loudly and stroked its whiskers, the Fairy Queen pirouetted on one toe and flourished her star-tipped wand, the Right Hon. Edward Bruin, unable to conceal his delight, danced a two-step in front of the Speaker's chair, the Mad Hatter flung his hat to the ceiling and caught it gracefully on his nose, Colum-

The Wicked Uncle.

bine and Harlequin chased each other over the benches, and even Pierrot smiled in a melancholy way. A thousand fairies outside the Parliament House, hearing the great applause and guessing the cause of it, flew up to the window with fluttering wings and peered in with laughing eyes.

The Wicked Uncle sat gloomily with his monocle screwed in his eye. The Bad Fairy tore her pocket-handkerchief to shreds and wept with vexation, and other members of the revolutionary party were silent and shamed.

It was then that Santa Claus arose. Smiling benignly beneath his long white eyebrows, with his cotton-wool beard flowing down his scarlet cloak, he stretched out his hand and addressed the great assembly. "My children," he said, "I am an old, old man, and I have seen many winters since the beginning of the world, but as I sat here during the first part of this debate, it seemed to me that my days of rule were at an end, and that Fairyland itself was doomed. I confess that I also, during recent years, have had my doubts as to the value of the old Yule tide customs. I have taken my gifts sometimes to people so utterly selfish that they were unworthy of them. I have heard the spoilt children of life complaining of the folly of Christmas. I have heard the cynics scoff at it. While the joy bells have been ringing, proclaiming peace and good-will, I have seen nations at war with each other as in the old pagan days which I remember from afar. I have seen people so stifled in luxury that they forget the misery of the poor, even when the spirit of Christmas calls them to charity. I have seen the Bad Fairy win many victories in spite of my good fairies with their magic wands. I have seen men gloomy in the presence of my mirth-makers, and unbelieving though Fairyland is revealed to their eyes, when the curtain rings up for the Pantomime. But, after all, those people are few among mortals, and the great majority must not be punished for their sins. Peter Pan has rejoiced my old heart by reminding me of the spirit of youth which never dies. In listening to his words I heard the voice of my own youthfulness in the beginning of Time. My dear children, for the sake of our little comrades among men, and on behalf of all good people who are grateful for our gifts, I ask you to give me a vote of confidence, so that the Christmas of 1913 may be no less joyful than its predecessors. The motion of the Wicked Uncle is defeated, and I declare it to be null and void."



The Rt. Hon. Edward Bruin, M.P.

"Three cheers for Santa Claus!" shouted Peter Pan.

Not only the representatives of the fairy boroughs but all the inhabitants of Fairyland cheered and cheered again, and before the echoes of that great ovation had died away a wireless message was on its way to the world from the clock-tower of Santa Claus's Parliament. It spelt out the good old words "A Merry Christmas!"

MY DAUGHTER and HALF THE KINGDOM

AN UP-TO-DATE FAIRY TALE IN EVER SO MANY CHAPTERS

Written and Illustrated by Dion Clayton Calthrop

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE preservation of the world's great simple romances is often due to accident. Thus have I been able to save, in the course of my travels, such wonderful things as "The Emu's Lament," "The Mystery of Cress and Featherhue," "Kindly Beware of the Hay Bottle," and now I am fortunate enough to be able to add "The True History of My Daughter and Half the Kingdom."

But for the chance of Fate, which held me up in a lonely Alpine Club hut with a traveller from the Deserts of Parmesan, I should never have heard the story of Prince Silas P. Noggerstein and the charming daughter of the King of Carnatia. The little history is divided into chapters as a convenient form, and also to allow the breathless readers some pause in the reading of such thrilling events. I may also add that the traveller from Parmesan sold me a Gruyère dog, an extraordinarily rare animal, which, being full of holes, will, if stood in a draught, play exquisite airs, as good as, if not better than, an Æolian harp.

Narrator (Truthful).

CHAPTER I

Upwards of twelve hundred people whose names (reading from left to right) were—(the recital of these names took

All rights reserved. Copyrighted in U.S.A., 1913

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

the traveller from Parmesan an immense time, far into the night, but as no one of these people ever comes into the story again it is perhaps needless to write them down). Anyhow, they were asleep.

In the topmost of the many towers of the palace the King was brooding, his purple eyes now and again searching the numberless papers on the table by him, now and again gazing at the comet-flecked sky. Round about him seven mathematicians sat dry eyed and motionless. At last the King spoke. "This," he said, "cannot go on."

King (brooding).

THE READER: "*I beg your pardon for interrupting——*"

THE AUTHOR: "*Not at all.*"

THE READER: "*I rather agree with the King.*"

THE AUTHOR (benignly): "*Explain yourself.*"

THE READER: "*I think this is an extremely dull story. Tell us 'The Emu's Lament.'*"

THE AUTHOR: "*I may seem to move slowly, but it is owing to the difficulty of translating from the Parmesan. The Parmesan is a language——*"

THE READER: "*Pray continue, I would sooner hear the story, dull as it is.*"

The fourth of the seven calculators spoke. "Most Majesty," he said, "if the debts are not paid they have threatened to cut off the water."

There was a tense silence, broken only by the deep breathing of the King's favourite lizard.

THE READER: "*Did I hear—lizard?*"

THE AUTHOR: "*Lizard was the word.*"

THE READER: "*Do lizards go in for deep breathing? Pardon my ignorance.*"

THE AUTHOR: "*I will overlook it.*"

THE READER: "*Isn't this rather a long chapter?*"

THE AUTHOR: "*Thank you.*"

CHAPTER II

A few hours later when dawn touched the topmost tower with roseate fingers the King spoke. The words came with obvious effort. "We must sell half the kingdom."

The tense silence was broken by the not quite such deep breathing of the King's not quite so favourite lizard.

THE READER: "*You stick to it about its being a lizard?*"

THE AUTHOR: "*My translation of 'velcucphtino' is 'lizard.'*"

THE READER (amazed): "*Content.*"

"Which half?" came in the deep tones of a hitherto neglected duke, also a scholar.

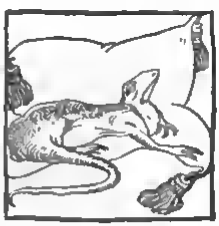
At this the King smiled, and the smile spread to the faces of the company. The kingdom had one notorious half.

CHAPTER III

THE AUTHOR: "*Do you care for geography?*"

THE READER (cautiously): "*I detest it.*"

THE AUTHOR: "*Well, you've got to stick a bit.*"



Lizard (Favourite).

The kingdom of Carnatia was divided into two parts with a river between them. To the right the kingdom met the country of Beetrutania, to the left the wild forests of Saveloy ran down to the long waste of mud flats. The mud flats were the other half of the kingdom.

CHAPTERS IV TO VII

A year full of unimportant events had elapsed and still the other half

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Duke (Old).

remained unsold. The King gave up drinking water, but even this economy was of no avail. Things came to a crisis.

THE READER. *"I was wondering——"*

THE AUTHOR. *"Hush! It will get absorbing in a moment. One must lead up to things."*

CHAPTER VIII

Once more the councillors met and this time the King was even more broody. "Look here," he said, "I can't get a bid for the swamp and things have come to such a pass that I can't even buy the cheapest crown jewels. It's absurd. Hasn't any one got an idea?"

Then the old Duke (see Chapter II) spoke up. "May I suggest——" he began.

"My dear Grace," said the King, "I should rather think you could."

"We have neglected the proper formula," said the Duke, screwing his coronet round and round, in his nervousness. "It says always 'My daughter—and half the kingdom.'"

All eyes (fourteen) glanced at the King.

"Primula," he murmured.

THE READER. *"Is this the heroine, please?"*

THE AUTHOR. *"I should jolly well think it was. Don't argue."*

Swallowing a gulp the King spoke manfully. "But she's—well, gentlemen, she's not much to look at."

In fact, Primula was not in the least like a Princess. She had straight black hair for one thing, and a little white face, and rather long large hands, and a very bad skin, and she was rather stout, but such a nice girl.

THE READER (furiously). *"Here have I gone on with this rotten story, waiting for the description of the heroine, and here's what you give me. It's disgusting."*

THE AUTHOR (*calmly*). *"Do not worry, gentle reader. You will see the reason in good time."*

CHAPTER IX

Her titles were long, ancient and many. She was the Saxethrowback of Heintz, the Archduchess of Asbestia, etc. etc. And no one thought anything of her. She wore very simple clothes, and did her hair anyhow, and her favourite walk was along the mud flats with her little Freakinese dog. And the ladies of the Court used to practise turning up their noses for hours so as to do it in unison as she passed them. And when, on the fateful day, the King and the councillors found her, she was all messy from picking blackberries.

"My daughter," said the King in his courtly way, "I have come with these gentlemen to show you the old book of rules. Read the marked bits, my dear, after you have washed your hands, and—we leave the rest to you."

Scarcely raising her eyes—

THE READER. *"Why not?"*

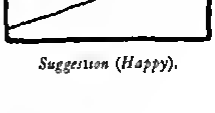
THE AUTHOR. *"You see she couldn't even afford to pay for the rent in her shirt."*

Scarcely raising her eyes she took the book and, after asking to be left alone, she began to read.

CHAPTER X

This is what she read. "All Princesses who remain unmarried at the age of seventeen must obey the following rules.

'Three questions with easy answers must be invented and the surrounding Princes invited to answer them. Pick the best Prince and say his



Suggestion (Happy).

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Kingdom, Other Half of

answers are correct. Prize Self, and Half Kingdom. Simple and effective. For other methods see War, Luck, Money.'"

A mischievous smile flickered about her beautiful large and unfashionable mouth. (Not in the least like a rosebud.) Placing the book carefully under her arm she whistled (one of the unmaidenly things she could do) to her dog, and moved towards the Palace.

CHAPTER XI

The Court was thronged. Bands played against one another. Wine flowed like water. The Proclamation was read and the various Princes present beamed in anticipation. They had none of them seen the Princess, nor did they know which half of the kingdom was to be given away. Some were poor adventurers in lurid crowns and cheap armour, others were hideous greedy men who had come to see if the Princess was worth half of any kingdom, and some were there just for fun. That was after they had signed the book-at-the-door-agreement to abide by the rules. But when the second half of the Proclamation was read a grim silence filled the room broken only by—

THE READER: "*Not those lizards again!*"

THE AUTHOR: "*No, sir. By the falling of their faces.*"

THE READER (much relieved): "*Thanks so much. Go on. It's getting a little better.*"

One by one the Princes passed into the room where Primula sat waiting.

THE READER: "*I say, you've missed out what the Second Part of the Proclamation was about.*"

THE AUTHOR: "*Oh, so I have. It was, roughly speaking, that all who could not guess the riddles were to be thrown into dungeons until they did guess or else paid a King's Ransom.*"

CHAPTER XII

One by one they failed to guess the answers, and as they were led away to the dungeons one heard such remarks as, "I shall write to the papers." "All these guessing competitions are swindles." "What a beastly shame!" But one and all were glad they had not to marry the Princess. When the Court was empty and the dungeons were full, the King's face fell more than ever before, because not one Prince had the price of a King's Ransom about him and he was just as badly off as before.

Then suddenly, just as the Princess was coming out to ask if she had to do any more, as she was dying for her tea, there dashed in a young man, who handed in his card, signed the book, took the oath, and shook the King warmly by the hand, all in one comprehensive movement. And when the

Stentor, The Great.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Herald read out his name in stentorian tones—

THE READER "*I never know what that means*"

THE AUTHOR "*Stentor was a very celebrated Professor of Elocution.*"

THE READER "*What a lot you must know!*"

THE AUTHOR (modestly) "*Nothing, I assure you. But, don't you see, this is the hero?*"

THE READER "*You don't say so. How fearfully exciting! What is his name?*"

Town (Old)

THE AUTHOR "*Wait*"

The Herald read out: "Prince Silas P Noggerstein"

"You bet,' said the Prince, smiling at everybody "Say, where's the young lady, and say, which half of this antique spot is thrown in with the Royalty?"

Seeing his case was hopeless the Old Duke (Chapters II and VIII) told him it was the swamp half.

"Bully," said the Prince. "And I'm a dead spot on these competitions Let me get right at it here and now"

With that—tears in the eyes of some—they showed him into the Princess's presence.

CHAPTER XIII

She looked at him and blushed. And he did the same Then in a timid voice she asked him the questions

"What is the difference between an egg and spoon race?"

"Have there any more wasp?"

But before she could ask him the third he had seized her in his arms

"Honey,' he said, "whisper to your Silas—there ain't any durned answers."

Smiling she bent her head

"Goroosh!" cried the infatuated man.

THE AUTHOR "*Would you care to pause awhile?*"

THE READER (hotly) "*Don't you dare stop here*"

THE AUTHOR (mopping his brow) "*Oh we go then. I knew you'd like it*

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Prince (American).

CHAPTER XIV

They hadn't been engaged a week before she got him to drop the P. Noggerstein and call himself Prince Silas. He paid a king's ransom, less ten per cent cash, and hired all the languishing Crowned Heads out of the dungeons as labourers. He made Freakinese dogs the rage and after the wedding and a short honeymoon—

THE READER: *"Stop. I say, this is all too quick. Where did they go for the honeymoon? My wife is sure to ask me."*

THE AUTHOR: *"If you must know, they spent it in seeing the great advertisement offices of Europe."*

—he began on his great work. He began by buying up all the newspapers in Carnatia, and having killed them he started one of his own called *The Fountain Penguin.*

CHAPTER XV

Every morning the inhabitants read in the F.P. all about the beauty of the Princess and all about the attractiveness of the other half of the kingdom. And every morning scientists wrote saying that the mud of the swamp had the most wonderful properties. And at last, when they were thoroughly saturated with the mud, and everything the Princess wore had become the fashion, Prince Silas began on his great idea. He built an enormous hotel in the middle of the swamp which was now called Mudrienbad and he began to advertise THE CURE.

THE READER: *"Cure—what for?"*

THE AUTHOR: *"Anything. Everything."*

THE READER: *"Where's the King all this time?"*

THE AUTHOR: *"I'll just show you one of the advertisements."*

CHAPTER XVI

THE NEWEST THING FOR HEALTH AND BEAUTY

Wallow in Our Mud.
It purifies the SKIN and the MIND.
All work done by genuine aristocrats,
Grand Dukes, and Crowned Heads.
The Grand Palace Hotel, Mudrienbad

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

No other Hotel in the Place
Princess as Housekeeper
Mud everywhere
SWAMP SOCIETY SONG BIRDS, twice nightly.
Come and make mud pies, and we'll do the rest.

THE AUTHOR: *"Would you care to hear one of the newspaper articles?"*

THE READER: *"Do we come to fairies or magic soon?"*

THE AUTHOR (infected by the Noggerstein spirit): *"Right now."*

CHAPTER XVII

From *The Fountain Penguin and Carnation Mail*—

"Few who knew the other half of the kingdom of yore would recognise the thriving place to-day. Visitors may bathe in beautiful mud in the morning, and in the afternoon take a tram ride to the old town (admission sixpence, guide one shilling). Here the King fully crowned and robed may be seen. (Visiting cards: One shilling to Duke; sixpence to Earl; threepence Baron—Knights Free. For introduction: Handshake, two and sixpence. Five minutes on Throne, five shillings. Chat with King and handsome photograph of same, ten shillings, (post free to America) Visitors should see the dungeons; Prime Minister at work or play; and view of Grand Hotel from King's Bedroom (after seven a.m.).

"Prince Silas, manager of Mud and Merriment Co., may be seen by appointment.

"The Princess will look after all visitors' personal comfort, and will sell at the Grand Hotel Kiosk reproductions in colour of the Three Questions every afternoon.

"Suppers with the upper circles a speciality."

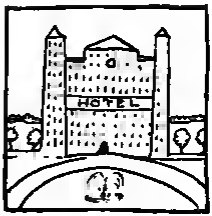
CHAPTER XVIII

THE AUTHOR: *"Wake up!"*

THE READER: *"I thought it was going to be a Romance."*

THE AUTHOR: *"Well, if that isn't Romantic, I'll eat my hat."*

THE READER: *"Where are the pretty bits and the happy ending?"*



Hotel, Front of. Excellent Rooms under the Clock.

THE AUTHOR: *"Ah! That comes now."*

So the Princess had so much work to do that she got quite slim, and the Princes worked so hard that they got quite happy, while as for Silas he made an enormous fortune and got stout and bald and had indigestion; but he was happy as a sandboy.

And they had fourteen handsome children, half of each kind, who all spoke Carnation without any accent.

CHAPTER XIX

And that is exactly the truth of My Daughter and Half the Kingdom as told to me by the traveller from Parmesan, as truthful a man as ever I met.

THE READER: *"Is 'The Emu's Lament' a better story?"*

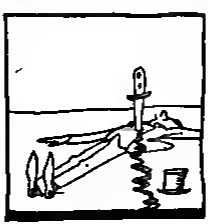
THE AUTHOR: *"Far better."*

THE READER (rising): *"Then I wish I'd heard it instead."*

CRITIC (meeting Reader outside): *"Have you been with that awful bore?"*

THE READER: *"Look at me."*

CRITIC: *"He has a fearsome story called 'The Emu's Lament,' but they say 'My Daughter and Half the Kingdom' is very fine."*

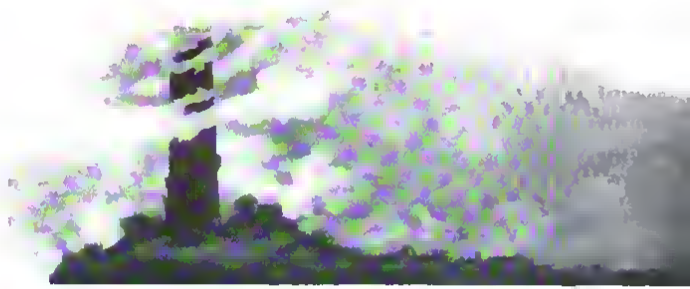


Critic (Dead).

CHAPTER XX

A critic was found dead this morning at two-thirty, under suspicious circumstances.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



THE TWO TOWERS

By Herman Scheffauer.
Illustrated by Jan Gordon.

WHEN the city of Holcar declared that it would build a great and lofty tower to commemorate its founding the rival city of Orchasse boasted that it would erect one still greater and loftier. When it was known that Holcar's tower was to be square, Orchasse announced that its own would be circular. When Holcar expressed its preference for limestone Orchasse declared itself passionately addicted to granite.

There ensued a feverish struggle between the two cities. Each strove to begin its tower first. Each chose a site in the very centre of its largest public park. And work began.

"Let us build for a thousand years!" said the proud city of Holcar.

"Let us build for two thousand years!" cried Orchasse defiantly.

A great square excavation, measuring five hundred trabats[1] at its sides yawned in the yellow clay of Holcar's park. After a week the bed rock lay exposed.

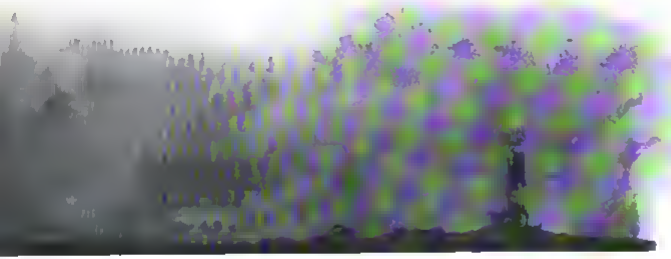
In the public park at Orchasse there was a similar pit, but circular in shape, likewise exposing the stratum of rock. It measured five hundred and sixty-four and one fifth trabats in diameter.

This, as everyone knows is equal in area to a square of five hundred trabats. Orchasse was not to be outdone in the size of its foundations.

The foundations were laid, and steadily in each city the cyclopean walls began to rise. They resembled

[1] Trabat: a linear measure of this land—consisting of 11 prellos: a prello being about equal to the English inch.

All rights reserved



the walls of an impregnable fortress. Great masts and scaffolding reared aloft. All day long the ponderous ashlars soared into the air, floating from the steel cables of the derrick-booms, and settling slowly into their places. The scaffolding swarmed with masons who toiled like madmen out of civic pride—and for good wages.

In a few months the top of each structure was already higher than any building in either city: higher than the domes of their court-houses, higher than the steeples of their churches.

From the top of each the other was plainly visible up and down the valley. From each flew its silken civic banner, broadly and defiantly to the breeze.

The great granite cube of Holcar mounted four hundred trabats six prellos into the air. The great limestone cylinder of Orchasse mounted four hundred trabats six prellos into the air.

Then came a pause. More funds were collected. Orchasse recommenced building. Holcar resumed activities the next day. The architects of the square tower advised a slight ledge or off-set in the wall every five hundred trabats—but no more than the slight inward taper of the circular structure at Orchasse.

The two towers had now reached a height of more than seven hundred trabats.

In misty weather their tops were already hidden. They had reached the level of the clouds. The two towns sneered at the city of Arcopim, which had prided itself on its jerry-built sky-scrapers—mere skeletons of steel with a skin of stone.

"For a thousand years!" cried Holcar, breathlessly.

"For two thousand!" panted Orchasse.

The preachers of the two towns prophesied a pestilence as a chastisement for these impious works.

"Our city is absolutely sanitary!" replied the Holcarites proudly.

"Our Board of Health is the best in the world!" retorted the Orchassians with pride.

The preachers drew dismal pictures of black-bellied clouds whose writhing jaws would spit thunderbolts against these sky-defying towers and fuse them into lava.

"We have taken the precaution to equip our towers with the latest lightning conductors," answered the two cities.

The preachers threatened them with Babel and the confusion of tongues.

But that threat frightened neither city. Theirs was already a cosmopolitan population. The foremen of the works spoke many languages.

For nine hundred trabats the towers now reared into the air. They were visible far out at sea—the square, truncated mass of Holcar and the rounded pile of Orchasse.

Soon, all in conformity with a great law, the difficulty of building increased

with the square of every ten additional trabats of height—at last with every trabat.

Yet neither city would cease its struggle. The two eyed each other with the old fanatic jealousy, hired informers to spy on the progress each made and kept pace with it, trabat for trabat, prello for prello.

Then Holcar began to build by night as well as by day—with the aid of huge gas-torches and electric arc-lights.

A day or two later, high above the luminous patch of mist where Orchasse lay outspread beneath the nightly heavens, arc-lights and gas-torches began to glare.

The towers blazed unto the firmament like ever-climbing altars, studded with fierce, wind-blown lights. And the work upon them went on without pause.

The citizens of both towns went about with elevated heads and noses, haughtier than ever before. Part of this stiff-necked attitude, however, was due to the fixed, backward inclination of the head induced by constantly gazing at the tops of their respective towers.

"Our tower will be the higher because the square plan is the stronger," boasted Holcar.

"Ours will not only be the higher, but it will last the longer, for the circular plan offers less resistance to the wind!" retorted Orchasse.

An altitude of one thousand trabats was reached by Holcar—the same height a day or two afterwards by Orchasse. Holcar soared to twelve hundred trabats; Orchasse overtook this in twenty-four hours. Fifteen hundred trabats was reached simultaneously by the towers of both cities.

Then a strange palsy seemed to fall upon the two towers and the two towns.

They had reached the limits of their endurance. Their funds, their dogged perseverance and their titanic strength were all exhausted.

It was as if the heavens had cried: "So far shall ye climb and no farther!"

Neither city could glory in its achievement—for the achievement, though great, had a follow. Each began to lament that it had been led to rear its accursed masses of stone.

Had Orchasse only been content to let Holcar pile up its senseless edifice! What an opportunity it would have been to mock at Holcar—to call it "Holcar's Folly"!

Had Holcar only been wise enough to abandon its design as soon as Orchasse had wind of it!

Now each tower stood annulled by the other. The cities were equal again, only poorer and more exhausted.

The monuments of glory had become monuments of shame. Babel had repeated itself. The preachers triumphed in denunciation. The unassailable barriers of the air were stronger than ashlars of stone or muscles of steel. They were stronger even than gold, which both cities held to be the mightiest of all superhuman forces.

Futility! Futility!

One day a remarkable personage appeared in audience before the Town Council at Orchasse.

This man called himself Professor Treharanac and described himself as a "Master of Matter and Energetics."

He was a very large man, with a reddish face and a white, bushy, senatorial beard. His thick and silken hair surrounded his head like a halo—as if each separate hair radiated like a ray of light or force. His bearing was stately, and his entire being seemed charged with a tremendous vitality, as though some inexhaustible source of dynamic energy lay within him.

He declared before the Councillors that he had discovered a new affinity between mind and matter, between the organic and the inorganic world—most marvellous of all, between moral force and physical force! He was the latter-day prophet of the old, old dictum: "Mind over matter."

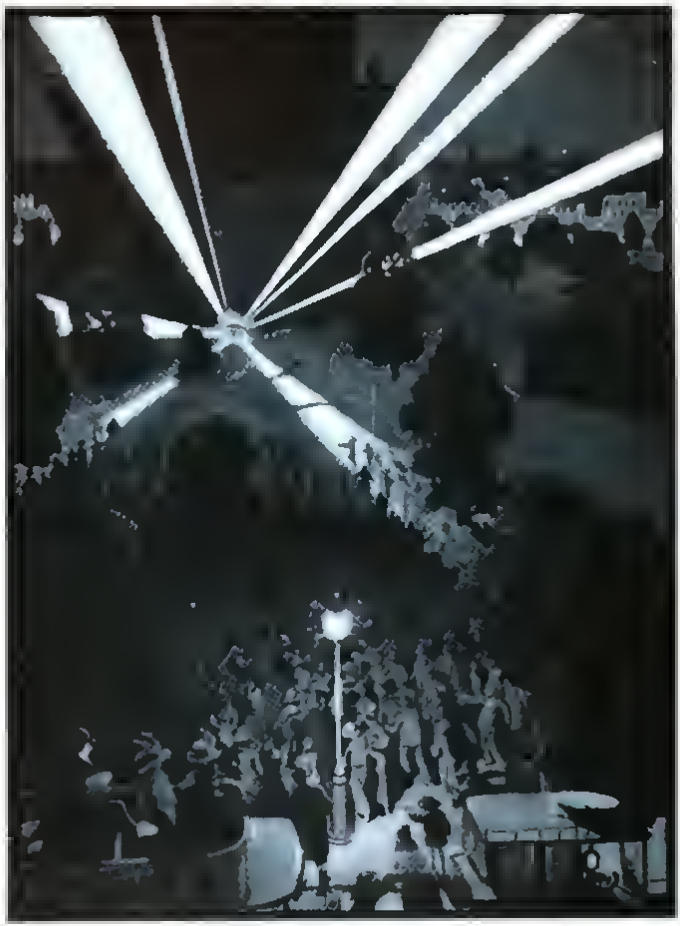
He offered the city his services. He flaunted a parchment in the solemn and sheepish faces of the Town Councillors. It was a contract.

In this it was written that for the sum of forty thousand kurlodins[1] he would undertake to "continue" the tower of Orchasse.

"What!" cried one of the Coun-

[1] Kurlodin: a silver coin, value about three shillings and sixpence.

Great masts and scaffolding reared aloft. All day long the ponderous ashlars soared into the air, floating from the steel cables of the derrick-booms, and settling slowly into their places *(page 209)*



From the cracks in the shed there streamed a wild, intolerable glare—a whitish blaze . . . that sent sheets of withering light, sharp as naked sword-blades, into the heavens (*page 214*)

cillors, " you mean that you will undertake to build it higher ? "

" Not to build it higher," answered Professor Treharanac, bowing very gravely and smiling, " but to cause it to *grow* higher."

" To *grow* higher ! What ! Of itself ? " asked another Councillor, puffing and sneering " *You* ? How do you mean to accomplish *that* ? "

" If I were to reveal *that*," answered the scientist, bowing again, " it would be quite unnecessary for you to pay me forty thousand kurlodins."

He would cause the tower to grow three trabats or more a day. If in thirty days it had not attained an additional height of a hundred trabats, he was to forfeit his entire fee.

These terms, despite the mystery of the man and his method, were deemed just. The parchment scroll was signed by the Mayor of Orchasse, Serra Murriff.

The whole city quivered with expectancy Holcar heard of the negotiations with Treharanac, and uttered its mind freely concerning the credulity of Orchasse, and of the charlatan to whom it was stupidly resorting for help.

The preachers of both cities denounced the whole project as a traffic with evil powers

Professor Treharanac dug a narrow pit at the base of the round tower until he reached the level of the bed-rock. Over the entrance to this shaft he erected a small shed with a stout door and lock. Thick electric cables were led from the local Power House—descended like long black serpents from their poles and writhed into the little shed built over the pit against the tower. Through these cables pulsed terrific currents of electricity.

Orchasse watched every move. Holcar was greatly disturbed

" Now," said the scientist, " before I can set these natural forces to work, you must bring me your greatest moral forces ! These I must co-ordinate with certain natural energies, partly chemical, partly dynamic We must assist the ascendency of these with the urging and impetus of moral qualities In this fashion does mind triumph over matter, thus does the great law of energy make matter animate and obedient to man's will—at least to *my* will. Bring me, first of all, your finest, your strongest, your very best moral qualities ! "

For a space Orchasse was taken aback Then it brought the Professor the Courage of its soldiers, a round thing, like a great orange or a painted cannon-ball—blood-red and warm. The Professor took the globe and vanished into his little hut

For three long intolerable days there was silence, darkness, a nervous strain that grew slowly to a hysterical despair.

At eleven o'clock on the night of the fourth day a greenish lightning flash burst over Orchasse. For a moment the round tower was flung as a gigantic and inky silhouette against the sky. At the same time a distinct shock, as of a slight earthquake, was felt throughout the city.

The people ran by thousands from their houses—every street poured its floods of human beings towards the great public park

There a strange sight met the eyes of the citizens

For hundreds of trabats in every direction the parched soil about the base of the monument lay cracked and fissured A thin smoke ascended from it, and from the clefts a steam—acrid, hot and sulphurous

The grass was already withered, and the trees that grew nearest the tower had taken on a rich autumnal foliage, though the year now stood at spring

Strangest of all were the ridges and hummocks that ran radiating in all directions from the tower When the light covering of soil was brushed away, these proved to be ribs and veins of stone—of green-grey limestone—like that of the tower itself !

The stone ridges were still moist and warm to the touch They resembled nothing so much as the sprawling, half-exposed roots of a gigantic tree, the trunk of which was represented by the tower

The tower had taken root !

Its feelers of stone lay embedded in the soil of the park like the tentacles of some huge octopus

From the cracks in the shed there streamed a wild, intolerable glare—a whitish blaze that seared the eye-balls and sent sheets of withering light, sharp as naked sword-blades, into the heavens. The interior of the shed seemed to be bursting and burning with this intense lustre. A crackling, fluttering sound came from the pit.

When the people touched the stone walls they cried out in amazement. These too were slightly warm and moist, and strangely smooth.

Almost like the flesh of a human being.

A glistening sweat oozed from the walls and swam slowly down their sides. A trembling, scarcely perceptible, ran through the tower, a tense vibration, as though the stupendous structure were in pain.

It was as if a pulse beat in the stone.

Some one applied his ear to the walls and cried out that he heard a rushing, hissing sound—as of water flowing up or down within the stone—as if the stone had veins and arteries—as if currents sighed and gurgled through them! The scaffolding that surrounded the tower like a wooden cage creaked and shook.

Atop the tower, vague and phantasmal in the moonlight, something was stirring. The stars, against which it stood outlined, quivered as in a haze of heat. Assuredly something was heaving and moving there upon the apex—like some great and shapeless beast! No one could distinguish form, outline or feature.

Over the sea of pallid, upturned faces and staring eyes the lightnings blazing from the shed darted lanes of light into the cowering, diluted darkness.

Now an indescribable, formless terror seized upon the multitude. The people trembled—like the tower; like it, they were caught in the clutch of mighty and incomprehensible forces—a monstrous interplaying and intermingling of living matter with what had always been held to be dead.

It was nature in the throes of her own potencies and the awe and the darkness were "as in the beginning."

The monument which had been cold and lifeless stone had suddenly become a grim, a horrible, sentient thing that lived and grew! Overcome with fear and dismay, the people fled to their homes.

The next day the tower was quite cold. The stony, writhen roots were cold. But to the huge amazement of all, full three trabats had been added to the top—three trabats of solid stone without seam or joint, as if cast in one solid mass!

Professor Treharanac emerged from his weird subterranean labours, black with smoke and soot, his white beard singed, his garments baked stiff with mud and covered with something that resembled ice or films of glass, yet was neither.

"The stone is cold, but it is still growing—as a tree is cold, but grows," said the scientist. "Bring me your moral forces—or immoral ones—so long as they are forces."

They brought him next the Industry of their working-people and artisans, for that was the cheapest and commonest of all their virtues. It resembled a square, highly-polished piece of wood, hewn rudely to the shape of a human head.

The Master of Matter and Energetics took this and vanished. In less than a week the tower had grown fifty-six trabats higher. The industry of the workers of Orchasse was by so much more potential than the courage of its soldiers.

Then they brought him the Fanaticism of their priesthood, the Swirhans, a swollen, bulbous thing of feverish orange red, mottled with green stains and studded with black excrescences.

When this choice and dynamic morsel was laid at its petrified yet all-devouring roots, the tower shot up by leaps and bounds full seven-and-seventy trabats.

All Holcar writhed with wrath and envy. Day by day it marked the round monument of Orchasse rise higher and higher. By exact geometrical calculation it was proved to be higher by over a hundred and twenty-six trabats.

The thirty days had passed. Professor Treharanac had fulfilled his contract. He presented his bill to the city. Forty thousand kurlodins.

But the Council of Orchasse acting upon the advice of its crafty and suspicious Mayor, Serra Murriff, refused to make payment until a year had elapsed. This, they declared, was their invariable custom with all municipal contracts.

"It is a test of permanence," said the Mayor, "a guarantee of thoroughness."

The Professor repeated his request three times and was three times refused. Then he vanished.

The tower nevertheless continued to grow slowly.

"Moral qualities! that is the whole secret of this fellow's method—and now we have his secret," exclaimed Serra Murriff, laughing loudly.

A few days later Professor Treharanac appeared before the Town Council of the rival city of Holcar.

He offered this city his services. Once again he flaunted a parchment in the sheepish and solemn faces of the Town Councillors. It was another contract.

In this it was written that for the sum of fifty thousand kurlodins he would undertake to "continue" the tower of Holcar.

The Council, eaten up with wrath and envy of Orchasse, received him with all honour. They were for signing the contract at once, but——

"To 'continue' the tower is not enough," said Mayor Joachim Flers as he beamed from his great chair of state; "you must promise that it shall exceed the height of the tower at Orchasse."

"That, gentlemen, depends upon *your* moral qualities," returned the scientist.

"And you will assure us that the other tower will not also continue to grow?" asked Flers.

"That, gentlemen, depends upon *their* moral qualities," Treharanac made answer.

"Very well," said Mayor Flers, rising to his full, imposing height and flourishing his long, scarlet flamingo quill, "we agree to pay you fifty thousand kurlodins—when our tower exceeds in height by at least one hundred trabats that of Orchasse. Behold our hand and seal!"

He signed his name with a spectacular sweep of the long red plume and an elaborate rubric.

"Pray, sir, observe that you agree to pay in advance," said the Master of Matter and Energetics, pointing with his long and waxen forefinger to a clause in the text.

There was no help for it. Despite its protestations, the Exchequer of the city was forced to pay to Treharanac the lordly sum of fifty thousand kurlodins ere he would raise a hand.

The square granite tower of Holcar now underwent the same transformation as that of Orchasse. There were the same subtle yet pervasive interfusion, metamorphosis and metabolism of matter. This was made plastic and receptive to some powerful and subversive will which dominated the mineral "life" of the granite with a vital, vegetative impulse.

"Bring on your moral qualities," ordered the Professor.

So they brought him the Pride of the citizens of Holcar, a battered brass cylinder, charged under heavy pressure, painted with gaudy stripes and scratched all over by hundreds of names.

This caused the square mass to mount some forty trabats into the air. It was again the same jointless bulk of stonework that had grown and was still growing upon the tower at Orchasse.

Yes, undeniably it was still growing!—as Holcar discovered to its deep chagrin.

"They are feeding the roots of their tower with their finest moral qualities," said the Professor. "One cannot stop the influence or operation of a moral quality. It behoves you to excel theirs by the strength and fineness of those you bring to me."

The tower of Holcar was rapidly overtaking that of Orchasse. But when Orchasse added the Vanity of its women, a brittle shell of glass glowing with all the wandering, metallic colours of a peacock's tail, its round tower mounted higher by over seventy-one trabats.

Holcar brought to its own tower the Vanity of its men, a similar shell, but larger and much cracked. This produced an increase in height of over

ninety-three trabats, which exceeded the altitude reached by Orchasse.

But when Orchasse flung in the Aspiration of its chief poet, Elo-Haron, in the shape of a globe of gold and azure, its tower grew so swiftly that it soon left that of Holcar far behind—or below.

The social life and the industries of the two cities were disintegrated. All day long, all night long, the people sat or stood in the open, their eyes riveted upon the top of the two towers, watching the animate stone adding mysteriously to its substance and pushing steadily higher.

The tower of Holcar now climbed over sixty-seven trabats higher under the impulse of the Greed of its millionaires.

This manifested itself in the shape of a heavy canvas sack covered with mildew and exuding a thick golden fat.

Then Orchasse suffered a relapse in adding the Intellect of its colleges and schools.

This appeared in the shape of a spheroid of leather, laced together on one side and distended with air.

Astonishing! On the application of this to the roots of its limestone, the tower sank lower by fifty-three trabats eight prellos, falling back almost to the level of Holcar's.

First one city, then the other, sacrificed the qualities of its heart, mind and soul to the growth of its tower.

Generosity, Enterprise, a modicum of Tolerance, the Justice of the courts, the Purity of its family life, even the bitter Hatred each bore the other, drove up the living stone higher and higher into the skies, now by a few trabats, now by a hundred or more.

The two structures now soared into the heavens like enormous, ever-growing, headless pillars—the one square, the other round.

Professor Treharanac remained invisible.

But every one knew that deep down in the grim, thick silence, the mud and the vitreous slime at the foundations of the tower he sat like some uncanny gnome and wrought his miracles with floods of lightning and mystic energies of mind. He had now brought the tower of Holcar one hundred and fifty trabats higher than its rival.

For a time Orchasse, as if in a stupor of despair, grew very slowly. Then, in a single night, it shot up for a tremendous reach.

Holcar stood aghast. Through one of its spies it learned that the motive power had been derived from Love, the romantic love of the sexes, a red and burning star whose flames seemed to sing and throw forth a bewitching, sweet perfume that filled the entire city.

It was a master-stroke on the part of Orchasse!

Despite the vast width of the bases, the towers had grown steadily more slender, so that they now bore some resemblance to colossal tapers. The useless wooden scaffolding still clung to the lower walls.

At night, atop the tower of Orchasse, a rose-red flame streamed far up in the heavens, like a new star, a quenchless crimson fire which now burned clearly, now cloudily in smoke. The glare was cast over the city and the hills, over the valley and the River Dar.

Far out at sea the roseate fire of the love of man and woman was visible to the homing ships—visible beyond the convexity of the world long ere the ships themselves caught sight of land.

A riot of love reigned in Orchasse. Citizens embraced one another in the streets, mortal enemies were reconciled, thousands of couples rushed to the altar, defying all Eugenists. There was even some talk of making peace with Holcar—now that Holcar lay humbled in the dust.

Holcar was not only humbled, but in despair.

Infuriated mobs surrounded the dark, grim bastions and shrieked for Treharanac's life.

"Death! death!" they yelled, "death to the impostor! He has betrayed us! Trample him into the mud! Hang him, crucify him on the scaffolding!"

Yet, when in answer to the hubbub he appeared in the doorway of his shed against the sun-like glare that filled the interior, his prophetic face, black eyes and calm, contemptuous smile daunted the mob, which fell back and was

They found the stupendous, pyramidal mass of the top embedded in an immense pit like the crater of a volcano. . . . There, half-buried in the earth, lay the white glowing mass of stone, throbbing like some colossal heart (*page 219*).

hushed. Truly the man was terrible and controlled terrible forces.

The Town Council demanded the return of the fifty thousand kurlodins.

"Be patient, and bring me such of your moral qualities as remain," was all he deigned to say.

"But the tower at Orchasse is still growing!" they cried.

"Let it grow," he replied; "the higher *their* tower, so much the worse for them!"

The words were prophetic.

The stupendous height the round tower had attained had destroyed its stability. The top began to yield to the wind-pressure. There was a constant oscillation and deflection. The tremendous pile bent first in one direction, then in another. Orchasse became terror-stricken.

The monument was threatening to fall!

If it fell it would crush homes, churches, palaces, factories and hovels as a felled pine crushes the toadstools at its feet.

When, obedient to the wind, the top of the tower swayed toward the west, then the entire population of that quarter rushed in a frenzy toward the east. When the wind blew from the south, the fear-maddened hordes who dwelt in districts to the north went charging frantically across the city. Neither by day nor by night was there peace for the tormented people of Orchasse.

And still their tower grew slowly and became more top-heavy and perilous every day. Nor was there any way of stopping its remorseless increase. Its monstrous roots of stone sucked up and battened upon the terror of the town, as if the veins of every human heart fed the huge, parasitic monster with the blood of fear.

On the air-illuminished, soaring top of the structure the bright rose-red flame threshed and streamed at night like some crimson signal of distress and cast an infernal glow, as of a bale-fire of war or plague, upon the agonised city.

Now the citizens of Holcar became suddenly panic-stricken and went to Treharanac to implore him to arrest the growth of their own tower lest a fate similar to that of Orchasse befell them.

"The growth is now organic and cannot be stopped," said the Professor, "not until the height exceed that of the tower at Orchasse. Thus was it written in the contract, and the contract must be fulfilled. It is as with the growth of a man or a tree—or a thought! All that you can do is to bring me your moral qualities—your best, your strongest—so that your tower, unlike that of Orchasse, will be firm and rigid. Fear is not a good moral quality with which to build."

But Holcar had exhausted almost all its moral qualities. There was a slight offering of Pity and Generosity—aroused by the plight of unhappy Orchasse—but that was all.

Then, one day, unseen by any one, an old woman, with white hair and a face trenched deep with the channels of tears, came to Treharanac.

Her son, a notorious motor-bandit, was about to be hanged for a brutal murder he had committed. All his life long he had been a monster of ingratitude and cruelty to his old mother. He had robbed, he had starved, he had even beaten her.

Hugged tightly against her breast the old woman bore something covered with thick wrappings of widow's weeds. It was heart-shaped, and shone through its coverings with an incandescence, a withering lustre that scorched the eye.

Treharanac received the grey woman with joy, reverently took her luminous bundle, kissed her wrinkled brow, and vanished again into his pit.

That night Holcar's tower began to glow.

From the apex downwards a phosphorescence stole over the stone, then a luminous pallor, then a translucency as of alabaster. This grew and grew until the titanic granite shaft stood forth as if hewn in pure and radiant marble, shading from a white blaze as of superheated iron at the top to a dull glow as of illuminated horn at the base.

Suddenly at the crest a star burst into flame, a star of such pure white and blinding splendour that the people stood stricken with awe and bared their heads.

A melodious hum came from the

stone, a vibration as of many wings, a vast suspiration as of many sighs—sounds that were as echoes of all the loftiest joys and all the profoundest sorrows in the world.

The tower of Holcar was now higher, far higher than the quivering, swaying structure at Orchasse. And it was as firm as the hills.

Overcome by joy and wonder, the people ran to Treharanac to learn what new moral force he had discovered.

"It is not new," said he, "nor did I discover it. It is one of the oldest things in the world, so old that you, that even I, had quite forgotten it. I, who have never known it, should never have forgotten it! It was brought to me by an old woman. That which has caused this tower to overtop that of Orchasse, that which you now see as a white flame on the apex, is nothing else than—Mother Love."

Holcar broke forth into pæans of joy and victory.

The municipality rewarded the old woman. It pardoned the son. It gave a bonus of ten thousand kurlodins to Treharanac, who vanished at once.

"We can easily make it up by the great saving in our electric-light bills," remarked Mayor Joachim Fiers.

Orchasse saw the overwhelming sun of white glory from afar, and the livid fear at its heart was changed into a red rage and a green envy that swept the city like a conflagration or like cholera.

The rose-red light upon its tower changed to an angry, poisonous red. The limestone pile began to smoulder, grow black and give forth an intolerable stench.

Early one dawn it burst into flame, just as though it were one vast pillar of coal. The blazing timbers of the scaffolding fell down like gigantic torches. At last, with a thunderous roar, the tower came crashing down from the heavens, collapsing upon itself in whirlwinds and tornadoes of ashes which carpeted the streets and the roofs of the city as though a volcano had spewed upon it.

The white light of Holcar burned on. Unhappy men and women from other cities, even from Orchasse, came to gaze upon this fire—as if to warm their hearts, bruised and frozen by Life.

Then, after several months, to the horror of all, the light began to flicker, to grow wan and sickly, until it glowed no longer like a sun, but like a moon.

One night a short, sharp concussion ran through the foundations of the city. The citizens sprang from their beds and rushed to the windows, their eyes fixed upon that region of the skies where the Light had blazed.

The Light was gone!

The very apex of the tower was gone!

A whitish reflection ran up the walls, as if these were now illuminated from below.

They found the stupendous, pyramidal mass of the top embedded in an immense pit like the crater of a volcano, which it had ploughed out by its plunge into the green acres of the public park.

There, half-buried in the earth, lay the white-glowing mass of stone, throbbing like some colossal heart.

The Holcarites were amazed. The philosophers and scientists were dumb. A flock of reporters ran to the old woman who had brought the small incandescent mass to Treharanac.

She was a good old soul, but very stupid, and could offer no explanation. But her once grief-stricken face had grown radiant like the tower. A young man stood at her side. In his features, too, there was something of this radiance.

It was her son—the murderer who had been condemned to death—now redeemed, and restored to her. His breast heaved with emotion; he was struggling to utter the unutterable. At last he burst forth:

"It is all very simple!

"Mother Love is the highest and strongest of all things.

"But it is not made to abide alone upon the heights.

"It needs Earth to live—and to love . . .

"And therefore it came back to Earth."

HERMAN SCHEFFAUER.

WHEN EARTH WAS YOUNG

By Charles G. D Roberts

Illustrated by Frank Verbeck.

I · Tree Man and Cave Girl

A Complete Short Story

THE clay-coloured, ape-like men squatted in council.

It was not long, as time went in the long, slow morning of the world—perhaps a half-score thousand years or so—since their ancestors, in the pride of their dawning intelligence, had swung down from their tree-tops, to walk upright on the solid earth and challenge the supremacy of the hunting beasts. Their arms were still of an unhuman and ungainly length; their short and powerful legs were still so heavily bowed that they had no great speed in running; and they still had their homes high among the branches, where they could sleep secure from surprise. They were still Tree Men; but they were men, intent upon asserting their lordship over all the other dwellers upon earth's surface.

It was but a battered and crest-fallen remnant of the tribe which now took counsel over their diminished fortunes. In an irregular half-circle they squatted, pawing gingerly at their wounds or scratching themselves uncouthly, while their apish women loitered in chattering groups outside the circle, or crouched in the branches of the neighbouring trees.

On a low, flat-topped boulder, which served the purpose of a throne, sat the black Chief of the Tree Men, playing with his unwieldy club (which was merely the root end of a sapling, hacked into shape with sharp stones), as if it had been a bulrush. In height and bulk he was far above his fellows. His jaws were those of a beast and his whole appearance was bestial beyond that of any other in the whole hideous throng—except for his eyes. These, though small and deep-set, blazed with fierce intelligence, and swept his audience with an air of assured mastery which made plain why he was chief.

All rights reserved. Copyrighted in U.S.A. by C. G. D. Roberts, 1914.

He was talking rapidly and angrily, with broad gestures and in a barking, clicking speech which sounded little more than half articulate.

Near the end of the foremost rank of the semicircle, very close to the haranguing Chief, sat one who was plainly of superior race to his companions. Something in the harangue seemed to concern him particularly, for he sprang to his feet and stood leaning on his club—which was longer and more symmetrically fashioned than that of the chief. In colour he was manifestly white, for all that dirt and the weather could do to disguise it. He was taller even than the great Black Chief himself—but shorter in the body, and achieving his height through length and straightness of leg. His face, though heavy and lowering, *was* a face—with square, resolute jaws, a modelled mouth, a big, fully-bridged nose and a spacious forehead. His eyes were blue, and now, deep under their shaggy brows, glared upon the Chief with desperate defiance. Close behind his heels crouched a girl, obviously of his own race—a tall, strong, shapely figure of a woman, as could be seen, though her attitude was one of utter dejection, her face sunk upon her knees and half her body hidden in the tangled torrent of her dull chestnut hair.

The tall alien, so dauntlessly eyeing the Chief, was Mawg the renegade, an outcast from that small but progressive tribe of the Cave Men who had achieved the conquest of fire. Mawg, lusting for vengeance upon his people and for the possession of the girl A-ya, who belonged to one of his chiefs and was accounted fairest among all that dwelt in the caves, had taught the Tree Men the use of war-clubs and then persuaded them to a mighty invasion of the Cave Men's country. The invaders had been hurled back with terrible and unheard-of slaughter. Two-thirds of their host had been wiped out in horror by the firing of the dry thickets which covered the Cave Men's front. But Mawg, when he saw that the day was going against him, had made a daring sally against the rear, where the women were guarding the caves, and had carried off A-ya, felling her with his club and flinging her over his back like a slain doe. Arrogant in his folly, he had not realised that the Tree Men would hold him to account for the calamity which he had brought upon them. He had not realised that the girl A-ya, with her straight limbs and her strong comeliness, might stir the craving of others besides himself. Now, as he listened to the fierce harangue of the Chief, as his alert ears caught the mutterings behind and about him, he saw the pit yawn suddenly at his feet. But though a brute and a traitor, he was no coward. His veins began to run hot, his sinews to stretch for the death-struggle which would presently be upon him.

As for the girl, unseeing, unhearing, her head bowed between her naked knees, she cared nothing. She loathed life, and all about her, equally. Her baby and her lord, if they yet lived, were far away beyond the mountains and the swamps, in the caverned hillside behind the smoke of the fires. Her captor, Mawg, she loathed above all; but she was here behind him because he held her always within reach, lest the filthy women of the Tree Folk should tear her to pieces.

Suddenly, without looking round, Mawg spoke to her, in their own tongue, which the Tree Men could not understand. "Be ready, girl. They are going to kill me now. The Black Chief wants you. But I kill him, and we run. They are all dirt. *Come!*"

On the word, he sprang straight at the great Black Chief, where he towered upon his rock. But the girl, though she heard every syllable, never stirred.

The spring of Mawg was like a leopard's; but the Black Chief, though slow of foot, was not slow of hand or wits. Though taken by surprise, he swung up his club in time to break the force of Mawg's lightning stroke, which would otherwise have broken his bull neck. As it was, the club was almost beaten from his grasp. He dropped it with a snarl and leaped at his assailant's throat with clutching hands.

Had it been possible to fight it out man to man, Mawg would have liked nothing better, though the issue would

have been a doubtful one But he had no mind to face the whole tribe, which was now surging forward like a pack of wolves. He had no time to repeat his blow fairly; but as he eluded the gigantic, clutching fingers he got in a light glancing stroke with the butt which laid open his adversary's cheek and closed one furious little eye At the same instant he whirled away lithely, sprang from the rock on the further side, and ran off like a deer through the trees, cursing the girl because she had not followed him About half the tribe went trailing after him, yelling hoarsely, while the rest drew back and waited uneasily to see what their Chief would do.

The Chief, clapping one hairy hand over his wounded eye, glared after the fugitive with the other. With a grunt he stepped down from his rock, and, heedless of his wound, strode over to the girl Through all the tumult she had never lifted her head from between her knees, nor shown the least sign of concern The Chief seized her by the shoulder and shook her roughly, signing her to come with him. She looked up and stared straight into his one open eye. In her eyes shifted the dangerous, lambent flame of a beast at bay, and for a moment she was on the point of darting at his throat

But not without reason was the Black Chief dictator of the Tree Folk Brutal and filthy though he was, and hideous beyond description, and horrible with his gashed face and the blood pouring down over his huge and shaggy chest, he was all a man, and the mastery in him checked her. She felt the hopelessness of fighting her fate The flame flickered out, leaving her eyes dull and leaden. She rose listlessly, and followed her new lord to the tree in which he had his dwelling of woven branches.

At the foot of the tree she hesitated, and shut her eyes Should she obey, yielding to her fate? Mawg, her late captor, she had hated with a murderous hate; yet she had submitted to him, in a dim way biding her time for vengeance. But this new master was an alien, and of a lower, beastlier type Toward him she felt a sick bodily repulsion. Behind her tight-shut lids the dark went red But the countless centuries of submission were in her blood also; and they whispered to her insidiously that she was lawful prey. A huge hand fell significantly upon the back of her neck She jumped, gave a sobbing cry, and sprang up into the tree. Who was she to challenge doom for an idea, a hundred thousand years before her time?

. . . . .

Some days' journey to the westward a tall hunter was making his way warily through the forest His colour, his build, and his swift grace of movement proclaimed him of the same race as Mawg and the girl A-ya, acquitting him easily of any kinship with the People of the Trees. In height and weight he was much like Mawg, but lighter in complexion, somewhat less hairy, and of a frank, sagacious countenance His eyes were of a blue-grey, calm and piercing, yet with a look in them as of one who broods on mysteries. He was obviously much older than Mawg, his long, thick hair and short, close-curling beard being liberally touched with grey He carried in one hand a peculiar long-handled club, which he had fashioned by lashing with strips of green hide, a split and jagged flint-stone into the cleft head of a stick In the other hand he bore two slender spears, their tips hardened and pointed in fire

Engrossed in his purpose, thinking only of regaining possession of the girl, the mother of his man-child, he shunned all contest with the great beasts who crossed his path, and fled without shame from those which undertook to hunt him He would risk no doubtful battle He satisfied his hunger on wild honey, and the ripe fruits and tubers with which the forest abounded at this season At night he made his nest, of hurriedly woven branches, in the highest swaying of the tree-tops, where not even the leopard, cunning climber though she was, could come at him without giving timely warning And so, doggedly and swiftly making his way due east, he came at length to the fringes of that vast region of swampy meres and

fruitful, rankly wooded islets which was occupied by the Tree Men.

Here Grôm had need of all that woodcraft which had so often enabled him to stalk even the wary antelope. The light colour of his skin being a betrayal, he rubbed himself with clayey ooze till he was of the same hue as the Tree Men. Crawling through the undergrowth at dusk as soundlessly as a snake, or swinging along smoothly through the branches like a grey ape in the first confusing glimmer of the dawn, he made short incursions among the outlying colonies, but could find no sign of the girl, or of Mawg, in whose hands he imagined her still to be. But working warily around the outskirts of the tribe, to northward, he came at last upon the stale but unmistakable trail of a flight and a pursuit. This he followed up till the pursuit came stragglingly to an end, and the trail of the fugitive stood out alone and distinct. One clear footprint in the wet earth revealed itself clearly as Mawg's—for there was no such thing as confounding that arched and moulded imprint with those left by the apish men. Feverishly the hunter cast about for another trail, smaller and slimmer. Forward he searched for it, and then back among the tramplings of the pursuers. But in vain. Clearly Mawg had been the sole fugitive.

Grôm sat down in sudden despair. If Mawg, who at least was no coward, had fled alone, then surely the girl was dead. Grôm's club and his spears dropped from his nerveless hands. It was well for him that no prowling beast came by in that moment of his unseeing weakness. Then a new thought occurred to him, and his despair flamed into rage. He leapt to his feet, clutching at his shaggy beard. The girl had been seized, without doubt, by the great Black Chief. The thought of this defilement to his woman, the mother of his man-child, drove him quite mad for the moment. Snatching up his weapons, he roared with anguish, and ran blindly forward along the trampled trail, ready to hurl himself upon the whole loathsome tribe. A gigantic leopard crouching in a thicket of scarlet *poinsettia* beside the trail, made as if to pounce upon him as he went by—but shrank back, instead, with flattened ears, daunted by his fury.

But presently the madness burned itself out. As sanity returned he checked his rush, glanced once more watchfully about him, and at length stepped furtively into the thick of the jungle. Now more than ever was his coolest craft demanded, that A-ya might be plucked from the monster's arms.

Following up the plain clue of that tumultuous pursuit, Grôm worked his way deep into the Tree Men's country. With all his craft and his lynx-like stealth, it was at times hair-raising work. Not only the ground thickets, but the tree tops as well, were swarming with his keen-eyed foes. He had to worm his way between swamp-sodden roots, and sometimes lie moveless as a stone for hours, enduring the stings of a million insects. And sometimes, not daring to lift his head to look about him, he had to trust to his ears and his hound-like sense of smell for information as to what was going on.

Then, about sunrise (for the Tree Folk, like the birds, were early risers) of the second day after the discovery of Mawg's foot-prints, the patient hunter's eyes fell upon A-ya. He had crept in to within a hundred yards or so of the Council Rock, which was surrounded by a horde of the Tree People. Crouching low as he was in a dense thicket, Grôm could discern but little; but he could see, over the heads of the listening mob, the Black Chief seated on the rock, his ragged club in his hand. He was haranguing his warriors in rapid clicks and gutturals, which conveyed no meaning to Grôm's ear. The harangue came soon to an end. The Chief stood up. The bestial crowd parted—and through the opening Grôm saw A-ya, crouched, with her hair over her knees, at the Chief's feet. Stepping down from the rock, the Chief seized her by the wrist and dragged her upright. She took her place at his heels, dejectedly, like a whipped dog. Grôm, in his thicket, ground his teeth, and with difficulty held himself in leash. Surrounded as A-ya was, at that moment, by the hordes of the Tree Men, any

Though taken by surprise, the Black Chief swung up his club in time to break the force of Mawg's lightning stroke, which otherwise would have broken his bull neck (page 304).

attempt at her rescue would have been hopeless folly.

There was something going on among the bow-legged mob which Grôm, from his hiding-place, could not at first make out. Then he saw that the Chief was trying to instruct his powerful but clumsy followers in the handling of the club and spear. Having been taught by the white renegade, Mawg, the Chief used his massive club with skill, but he was still clumsy, and absurdly inaccurate, in throwing the spear. After he had split the face of one of his followers by a misdirected cast, he gave up the spear-throwing, turned to the girl, and ordered her to teach this art of her people. It was obvious that the mob had vast confidence in her powers, as one of superior race, although a mere woman, for they opened out at once on two sides to leave room for the expected display. The heart of the watcher in the thicket began to thump as he saw a way clearing itself between his hiding-place and the wild-haired woman he loved.

A-ya affected to misunderstand the Chief's orders. She took the spear, but stood holding it in stupid dejection. The Chief threatened her angrily, but she paid no attention. At this moment the whistling cry of a plover sounded from the thicket. The girl straightened herself and every muscle grew tense. The melancholy cry came again. It was a strange place for a plover to lurk in, that rank thicket of jungle; but the Tree Men took no notice of the incongruity. Upon the girl, however, the effect of the cry was magical. She gave no glance toward the thicket, but suddenly, smilingly, she seemed to understand the orders of the Chief. Poising the rude spear at the height of her shoulder, she pointed to a huge, whitish fungus which grew upon a tree-root some sixty or seventy feet away. With a flexing of her whole lithe body—as Grôm had taught her—she made her throw. The white fungus was split in halves.

With a hoarse clamour of admiration, the mob surged forward to examine the fragments. Even the Chief, though disdaining to show the interest of his followers, took a stride or two in the same direction. For a second his back was turned. In that second, the girl fled, light and swift as a deer, speeding toward the thicket whence the cry of the plover had sounded. Her long, abundant hair streamed out behind her as she ran.

With a bellow of wrath, the Black Chief, the whole mob at his heels, came pounding after her. The next instant, out from the thicket leapt Grôm, a towering figure, and stood with spear uplifted. Like a lion at bay, he glanced swiftly this way and that, balancing the chances of battle and escape, while he menaced the foes immediately confronting him.

At this amazing apparition, the mob paused irresolute; but the Black Chief came on like a mad buffalo. Grôm hurled one of his two spears. He hurled it with a loathing fury; but he was compelled to throw high, to clear A-ya's head. The Chief saw it coming, and cunningly flung himself forward on his face. The weapon hurtled on viciously, and pierced the squat body of one of the waverers a dozen paces behind. At his yell of agony the mob woke up, and came on again with guttural, barking cries. But already Grôm and the girl, side by side, were fleeing down an open glade to the left, toward a breadth of still water which they saw gleaming through the trunks.

All the Folk of the Caves could swim like otters, and both Grôm and the girl were expert beyond their fellows. The water before them was some three or four hundred yards in width. They did not know whether it was a sluggish fenland river, or the arm of a lake; but, heedless of the peril of crocodiles and water-snakes, they plunged in, and with long, powerful side-strokes went surging across toward the opposite shore. They had a clear start of thirty or forty yards, and their pace in the water was tremendous. Some heavy splashes in the water behind them showed how the clumsy missiles of their foes—ragged clubs and fragments of broken branches—were falling short; and they looked back derisively.

The bow-legged, shaggy men with

Loading themselves with the ripe fruit, Grôm and A-ya climbed high into a tree, and wove themselves a safe resting place among the branches (page 312).

their wide, red, skyward nostrils were ranged along the shore, and the Chief was fiercely urging them into the water. They shrank back in horror at the prospect—which, indeed, seemed little to the taste of the Chief himself. Presently he seized the two nearest by their matted manes, and flung them headlong in. With yells of terror they scrambled out again and scurried off to the rear like half drowned hens.

The Chief screeched an order. Straightway the mob divided. One part went racing clumsily up the shore to the left, the other followed the Chief along through the rank sedge-growth to the right—the Chief, by reason of his superior stature and length of leg, rapidly opening up his lead.

"It's nothing but a pond," said Grôm, in disgust, "and they're coming round the shore to head us off."

But the girl, her hair trailing darkly on the water behind her, only laughed. She was free at last. And she was with her man.

Suddenly Grôm felt a sharp, stabbing pain in the calf of his leg. With a cry, he looked back, expecting to see a water-snake gliding off. He saw nothing. But in the next instant another stab came in the other leg. Then A-ya screamed, "They're biting me all over." A dozen stinging punctures distributed themselves all at once over Grôm's body. Then he understood that their assailants were no water-snakes.

"Quick! To shore!" he ordered. Throwing all their strength into a breath-sapping, over-hand roll, they shot forward, gained the weedy shallows and scrambled ashore. Their bodies were hung thickly with gigantic leeches.

Heedless of the wounds and the drench of blood, they tore off their loathsome assailants. Then, after a few seconds' halt to regain breath and decide on their direction, they started north-westward at a rapid, swinging lope, through a region of open grassy glades set with thickets of giant fern and mimosa.

They had run on at this free pace for a matter of half an hour or more, and were beginning to flatter themselves that they had shaken off their pursuers when almost directly ahead of them, to the right, appeared the Black Chief, lumbering down upon them. Nearly half a mile behind, between the mimosa clumps, could be seen the mob of his followers straggling up to his support. He yelled a furious challenge, swung up his great club, and charged upon Grôm. Waving A-ya behind him, Grôm strode forward, accepting the challenge.

As man to man, the rivals looked not unfairly matched. The fair-skinned Man of the Caves was the taller by half a head, but obviously the lighter in weight by a full stone, if not more. His long, straight, powerfully muscled legs had not the massive strength of his bow-legged adversary's. He was even slim, by comparison, in hip and waist. But in chest, arms and shoulders his development was the finer. Physically, it seemed a matter of the lion against the bear.

To Grôm there was one thing almost as vital, in that moment, as the rescue of his woman. This was the slaking of his lust of hate against the filthy beast-man who had held that woman captive. Failing ancestral instincts flamed into new life within him. His impulse was to fling down spear and club, to fall upon his rival with bare, throttling hands and reviling teeth. But his will, and his realisation of all that hung upon the outcome, held this madness in check.

Silent and motionless, poised lightly and gathered as if for a spring, Grom waited till his adversary was within some thirty paces of him. Then, with deadly force and sure aim, he hurled his one remaining spear. But he had not counted on the lightning accuracy, swifter than thought itself, with which the Men of the Trees used their huge hands. The Black Chief caught the spear-head within a few inches of his body. With a roar of rage he snapped the tough shaft like a parsnip stalk, and threw the pieces aside. Even as he did so Grôm, still voiceless and noiseless, was upon him.

Had the vicious swing of Grôm's flint-headed club found its mark, the battle would have been over. But the Black Chief, for all his bulk, was quick as an

eel. He bowed himself to the earth, so that the stroke whistled idly over him, and in the next second he swung a vicious, short blow upwards. It was well-aimed, at the small of Grôm's back. But the latter, feeling himself overbalanced by his own ineffective violence, leapt far out of reach before turning to see what had happened. The Chief recovered himself, and the two lashed out at each other so exactly together that the great clubs met in mid-air. So shattering was the force of the impact, so numbing the shock to the hairy wrists behind it, that both weapons dropped to the ground.

Neither antagonist dared stoop to snatch them up. For several seconds they stood glaring at each other, their breath hissing through clenched teeth, their knotted fingers opening and shutting. Then they sprang at each other's throats—Grôm in silence, the Black Chief snarling hoarsely. Neither, however, gained the fatal grip at which he aimed. They found themselves in a fair clinch, and stood swaying, straining, sweating, and grunting, so equally matched in sheer strength that to A-ya, standing breathless with suspense, the dreadful seconds seemed to drag themselves out to hours. Then Grôm, amazed to feel that in brute force he had found his match, feigned to give way. Loosing the clutch of one arm, he dropped upon his knee. With a grunt of triumph the Black Chief crashed down upon him, only to find himself clutched by the legs and hurled clean over his wily adversary's head. Before he could recover himself, Grôm was upon him, pinning him to the earth and reaching for his throat. In desperation the Tree Man set his huge ape teeth, with the grip of a bull-dog, deep into the muscular base of Grôm's neck, and began working his way in toward the artery.

At this moment A-ya glanced about her. She saw two bodies of the Tree Men closing in upon them from either side—the nearest not much more than a couple of hundred yards' distant. Her lord had plainly ordered her to stand aside from the combat, but this was no time for obedience. She snatched up the sharpened fragment of the broken spear. Gripping it with both hands she drove it with all her force into the side of the Black Chief's throat, and left it there. With a hideous cough he relaxed his grip. His limbs straightened out stiffly, and he lay quivering.

Covered with blood, Grôm sprang to his feet, and turned angrily upon A-ya. "*I* would have killed him," he said coldly.

"There was no time," answered the girl, and pointed to the advancing hordes.

Without a word Grôm snatched up his club, wrenched the broken spear from his dead rival's neck, thrust it into the girl's hand, and darted for the narrowing space of open between the two converging mobs.

With their greatly superior speed it was obvious that the two fugitives might reasonably expect to win through. They were surprised, therefore, at the note of triumph in the furious cries of the Tree Men. A few hundred yards ahead the comparatively open country came to an end, and its place was taken by a belt of splendid crimson bloom, extending to right and left as far as the eye could see. It was a jungle of shrubs some 'twenty feet high, with scanty, pale green leaves almost hidden by their exuberance of blossom. But jungle though it was, Grôm's sagacious eyes decided that it was by no means dense enough seriously to hinder their flight. When they reached it, the jabbering hordes were almost upon them. But, with mocking laughter, they slipped through and plunged in among the grey stems, beneath the over-shadowing rosy glow. Their pursuers yelled wildly—it seemed to Grôm a yell of exultation—but they halted abruptly at the edge of the rosy barrier and made no attempt to follow.

"They know they can't catch us," said Grôm, slackening his pace. But the girl, puzzled by this sudden stopping of the pursuit, felt uneasy and made no reply.

Loping onward at moderate pace through the enchanting pink light, which filtered down about them through the massed bloom overhead, they

presently became conscious of an oppressive silence. The cries of their pursuers having died away behind them, there was now nothing but the soft thud of their own foot-falls to relieve the anxious intentness of their ears. Not a bird-note, not the flutter of a wing, not the hum or the darting of a single insect, disturbed the strangely heavy air. No snake or lizard or squeaking mouse scurried among the fallen leaves. They wondered greatly at such stillness. Then they wondered at the absence of small undergrowth, the lack of other shrubs and trees such as were wont to grow together in the warm jungle. Nothing anywhere about them but the endless grey stems and pallid slim leaves of the oleanders, with their rose-red roof of blossom.

Presently they felt a lethargy creeping over their limbs, which began to grow heavy; and a dull pain came throbbing behind their eyes. Then understanding of those cries of triumph flashed into Grôm's mind. He stopped, and clutched the girl by the wrist. "It is poison here. It is death," he muttered. "That's why they shouted."

"Yes, everything is dead but the red flowers," whispered A-ya, and clung to him, shuddering with awe.

"Courage!" cried Grôm, lifting his head and dashing his great hand across his eyes. "We must get through. We must find air."

Shaking off the deadly sloth, they ran on again at full speed, peering through the stems in every direction. The effort made their brains throb fiercely. And still there was nothing before them and about them but the endless succession of slender grey stems and the downpour of that sinister rosy light. At last A-ya's steps again began to lag, as if she were growing sleepy.

"Wake up!" shouted Grôm, and dragged so fiercely at her arm that she cried out. But the pain aroused her to a new effort. She sprang forward, sobbing. The next moment, she was jerked violently to the left. "This way!" panted Grôm, the sweat pouring down his livid face; and there, through the stems to the left, her dazed eyes perceived that the hated rosy glow was paling into the whiteness of the natural day.

It was a big white rock, an island thrust up through the sea of treacherous bloom. With fumbling, nerveless fingers they scaled its bare sides, flung themselves down among the scant but wholesome herbage which clothed its top, and filled their lungs with the clean, reviving air. Dimly they heard a blessed buzzing of insects, and several great flies, with barred wings, lit upon them and bit them sharply. They lay with closed eyes, while slowly the throbbing in their brains died away and strength flowed back into their unstrung limbs.

Then, after perhaps an hour, Grôm sat up and looked about him. On every side outspread the fatal flood of the rose-red oleanders, unbroken except toward the north-west. In that quarter, however, a spur of the giant forest, of growths too mighty to feel the spell of the envenomed blooms, was thrust deep into the crimson tide. Its tip came to within a couple of hundred yards of the rock. Having fully recovered, Grôm and A-ya swung down, with loathing, into the pink gloom, fled through it almost without drawing breath, and found themselves once more in the rank green shadows of the jungle. They went on till they came to a thicket of plantains. Then, loading themselves with the ripe fruit, they climbed high into a tree, and wove themselves a safe resting-place among the branches.

For the next few days their journey was without adventure, save for the frequent eluding of the monsters of that teeming world. Grôm had his club, A-ya her broken spear, but they were avoiding all combats in their haste to get back to their own country of the homely caves and the guardian watch-fires. At the approach of the great black lion or the sabre-tooth, or the wantonly malignant rhinoceros, they betook themselves to the tree-tops, and continued their way by that aerial path as long as it served them. The most subtle of the beasts they knew they could outwit, and their only anxiety now was Mawg, whose craft and courage Grôm could no longer hold in

With a scream, Mazg bounded to his feet. But it was too late. Before he could either strike or flee, Mazg was beaten down again, with a smash of that pile-driving beak (page 314).

scorn. He was doubtless at large, and quite possibly on their trail, waiting to catch them unawares. They never allowed themselves, therefore, to sleep both at the same time. One always kept on guard; and hence their progress, for all their eagerness, was slower than it would otherwise have been.

On a certain day, after a long unbroken stretch of travel, A-ya rested and kept watch in a tree-top, while Grôm went to fetch a bunch of plantains. It was fairly open country, a region of low herbage dotted with small groves and single trees; and the girl, herself securely hidden, could see in every direction. She could see Grôm wandering from plantain clump to plantain clump, seeking fruit ripe enough to be palatable. And then, with a shiver of hate and dread, she saw the dark form of Mawg, creeping noiselessly on Grôm's trail, and not more than a couple of hundred paces behind him. At the very moment when her eyes fell upon him, he dropped flat upon his face, and began worming his way soundlessly through the herbage.

Her mouth opened wide to give the alarm. But the cry stopped in her throat, and a smile of bitter triumph spread over her face.

If Mawg was hunting Grôm, he was at the same time himself being hunted. And by a dreadful hunter.

Out from behind a thicket of glowing mimosa appeared a monstrous bird, some nine or ten feet in height, lifting its feet very high in a swift but noiseless and curiously delicate stride. Its dark plumage was more like long, stringy hair than feathers. Its build was something like that of a gigantic cassowary, but its thighs and long blue shanks were proportionately more massive. Its neck was long, but immensely muscular and bore the weight of an enormous head, as long as that of a horse, and armed with a huge, hooked, rending, vulture's beak. The apparent length of this terrible head was increased by a pointed crest of blood-red feathers, projecting straight back in a line with the fore-part of the skull and the beak.

The crawling figure of Mawg was still a good hundred paces from the unsuspecting Grôm, when the great bird overtook it. A-ya, watching from her tree-top, clutched a branch and held her breath. Mawg's ears caught a sound behind him, and he glanced around sharply. With a scream, he bounded to his feet. But it was too late. Before he could either strike or flee, he was beaten down again, with a smash of that pile-driving beak. The bird planted one huge foot on its victim's loins, gripped his head in its beak, and neatly snapped his neck. Then it fell greedily to its hideous meal.

At Mawg's scream of terror, Grôm had turned and rushed to the rescue, swinging his club. But before he had covered half the distance, he saw that the monster had done its work, and he hesitated. He was too late to help the victim. And he knew the mettle of this ferocious bird almost as much to be dreaded, in single combat, as the sabre-tooth itself. At his approach, the bird had lifted its dripping beak, half-turned, and stood gripping the prey with one foot, swaying its grim head slowly and eyeing him with malevolent defiance. Still he hesitated, fingering his club; for the insolence of that challenging stare made his blood seethe. Then came A-ya's voice from the tree-top, calling him. "Come away!" she cried. "It was Mawg."

Whereupon he turned, with the content of one who sees all old scores cleanly wiped out together, and went back to gather his ripe plantains.

The peril of Mawg being thus removed from their path, they journeyed more swiftly; and when the next new moon was a thin white sickle in the sky, just above the line of saw-toothed hills, they came safely back to the comfortable caves and the clear-burning watch fires of their tribe.

C. G. D. Roberts.

Another story in this series will appear in the April issue.

WHEN EARTH WAS YOUNG

THE BENDING OF THE BOW

A Complete Short Story

BY CHARLES G D ROBERTS

Illustrated by FRANK VERBECK

BEFORE the Caves of the Pointed Hills the fires of the tribe burned brightly. Within the caves reigned plenty and an unheard-of security; for since the conquest of fire those monstrous beasts and gigantic, carnivorous, running birds, which had been Man's ceaseless menace ever since he swung down out of the tree-tops to walk the earth erect, had been held at a distance through awe of the licking flames. Though the great battle which had hurled back the invading hosts of the Tree Men had cost the tribe more than half its warriors, the Caves were swarming with vigorous children. To Bawr, the Chief, and to Grôm, his Right Hand and Councillor, the future of the tribe looked secure.

So sharp had been the lessons lately administered to the prowling beasts—the terrible sabre-tooth, the giant red bear of the caves, the proud black lion, and the bone-crushing cave hyena—that even the stretch of bumpy plain outside the circle of the fires, to a distance of several hundred paces, was considered a safe play-ground for the children of the tribe. On the outermost skirts of this playground, to be sure, just where the reedy pools and the dense bamboo thickets began, there was a fire kept burning. But this was more as a reminder than as an actual defence. When a bear or a sabre-tooth had once had a blazing brand thrust in his face, he acquired a measure of discretion. Moreover, the activities of the tribe had driven all the game animals to some distance up the valley; and it was seldom that anything more formidable than a jackal or a civet-cat cared to come within a half-mile of the fires.

It was now two years since the rescue of A-ya from her captivity among the Tree Men. Her child by Grôm was a

All rights reserved. Copyrighted in U.S.A. by C. G. D. Roberts 1911.

straight-limbed, fair-skinned lad of somewhere between four and five years She sat cross-legged near the sentinel fire, some fifty yards or so from the edge of the thickets, and played with the lad, whose eyes were alight with eager intelligence. Behind her sprawled playing contentedly with its toes and sucking a banana, a fat brown baby of some fourteen or fifteen months

Both A-ya and the boy were interested in a new toy It was, perhaps, the first whip. The boy had succeeded in tying a thin strip of green hide, something over three feet in length, to one end of a stick which was several inches longer. The uses of a whip came to him by unerring insight, and he began applying it to his mother's shoulders The novelty of it delighted them both. A-ya, moreover, chuckled slyly at the thought that the procedure might, on some future occasion, be reversed, not without advantage to the cause of discipline

At last the lithe lash, so enthusiastically wielded, stung too hard for even A-ya, with all her stoicism, to find it amusing She snatched the toy away and began playing with it herself The lash, at its free end, chanced to be slit almost to the tip, forming a loop. The butt of the handle was formed by a jagged knot, where it had been broken from the parent stem. Idly but firmly, with her strong hands she bent the stick, and slipped the loop over the jagged knot, where it held.

Interested, but with no hint of comprehension in her bright eyes, she looked upon the first bow—the stupendous product of a child and a woman playing

The child, displeased at this new, useless thing, and wanting his whip back, tried to snatch the bow from his mother's hands But she pushed him off. She liked this new toy. It looked, somehow, as if it invited her to do something with it Presently she pulled the cord, and let it go again Tightly strung, it made a pleasant little humming sound This she repeated many times, holding it up to her ear and laughing with pleasure. The boy grew interested thereupon, and wanted to try the new game for himself. But A-ya was too absorbed. She would not let him touch it "Go get another stick," she commanded impatiently; but quite forgot to see her command obeyed

As she was twanging the strange implement which had so happily fashioned itself under her hands, Grôm came up behind her. He stepped carefully over the sprawling brown baby He was about to pull her heavy hair, apparently, but his eyes fell upon the thing in her hands, and he checked himself

For minute after minute he stood there motionless, watching and studying the new toy. His eyes narrowed, his brows drew themselves down broodingly The thing seemed to him to suggest dim, cloudy, vast possibilities, and he groped in his brain for some hint of the nature of these possibilities. Yet as far as he could see it was good for nothing but to make a faintly pleasant twang for the amusement of women and children. At last he could keep his hands off it no longer. "Give it to me," said he suddenly, laying hold of A-ya's wrist.

But A-ya was not yet done with it She held it away from him, and twanged it with redoubled vigour. Without further argument, and without violence, Grôm reached out a long arm, and found the bow in his grasp A-ya was surprised that such a trifle should seem of such importance in her lord's eyes, but her faith was great She shook the wild mane of hair back from her face, silenced the boy's importunings with an imperative gesture, and gathered herself with her arms about both knees to watch what Grôm would do with the plaything.

First he examined it minutely, and then he fastened the thong more securely at either end. He twanged it as A-ya had done He bent it to its limit and eased it slowly back again, studying the new force imprisoned in the changing curve At last he asked who had made it

"I did," answered A-ya, very proud of her achievement now that she found it taken so seriously by the one being to whom her adventurous spirit really deferred

"No, *I* did!" piped the boy, with an injured air.

The mother laughed indulgently. "Yes, he tied one end, and beat me with it," said she. "Then I took it from him, and bent the stick and tied the other end."

"It is very good!" said Grôm, nodding his approval musingly. He squatted down a few feet away, and began experimenting.

Picking up a small stone, he held it upon the cord, bent the bow a little way, and let go. The stone flew up, and hit him with amazing energy in the mouth.

"*Oh!*" murmured A-ya, sympathetically, as the bright blood ran down his beard. But the child, thinking that his father had done it on purpose, laughed with hearty appreciation. Somewhat annoyed, Grôm got up, moved a few paces farther away, and sat down again with his back to the family circle.

As to the force that lurked in this slender little implement he was now fully satisfied. But he was not satisfied with the direction in which it exerted itself. He continued his experiments, but was careful to draw the bow lightly.

For a long time he found it impossible to guess beforehand the direction which the pebbles, or the bits of stick or bark, would take in their surprising leaps from the loosed bow-string. But at length a dim idea of aim occurred to him. He lifted the bow—his left fist grasping its middle—to the level of his eyes, at arm's length. He got the cord accurately in the centre of the pebble, and drew toward his nose. This effort was so successful that the stone went perfectly straight—and caught him fair on the thumb-knuckle.

The blow was so sharp that he dropped the bow with an angry exclamation. Glancing quickly over his shoulder to see if A-ya had noticed the incident, he observed that her face was buried between her knees and quite hidden by her hair. But her shoulders were heaving spasmodically. He suspected that she was laughing at him, and for a moment, as his knuckle was aching fiercely, he considered the advisability of giving her a beating. He had never done such a thing to her, however, though all the other Cave Men, including Bawr himself, were wont to beat their women on occasion. In his heart he hated the idea of hurting her; and it would hardly be worth while to beat her without hurting her. The idea, therefore, was promptly dismissed. He eyed the shaking shoulders gloomily for some seconds; and then, as the throbbing in the outraged knuckle subsided, a grin of sympathetic comprehension spread over his own face. He picked up the bow, sprang to his feet, and strolled over to the edge of a thicket of young cane.

The girl, lifting her head, peered at him cautiously through her hair. Her laughter was forgotten on the instant, because she guessed that his fertile brain was on the trail of some new experiment.

Arriving at the cane-thicket, Grôm broke himself half-a-dozen well-hardened, tapering stems, from two to three feet in length, and about as thick at their smaller ends as A-ya's little finger. These seemed to suggest to him the possibility of better results than anything he could get from those erratic pebbles.

By this time quite a number of curious spectators—women and children mostly, the majority of the men being away hunting, and the rest too proud to show their curiosity—had gathered to watch Grôm's experiments. They were puzzled to make out what it was he was busying himself with. But as he was a great chief, and held in deeper awe than even Bawr himself, they did not presume to come very near, and they had therefore not perceived, or at least they had not apprehended, those two trifling mishaps of his. As for Grôm, he paid his audience no attention whatever. Now that he had possessed himself of those slender, straight shafts of cane, all else was forgotten. He felt, as he looked at them and poised them, that in some vital way they belonged to this fascinating implement which A-ya had invented for him.

Selecting one of the shafts, he slowly applied the bigger end of it to the bow-string, and stood for a long time pondering it, drawing it a little way and easing

it back without releasing it. Then he called to mind that his spears always threw better when they were hurled heavy end first. So he turned the little shaft and applied the small end to the bow-string. Then he pulled the string tentatively, and let it go. The arrow, all unguided, shot straight up into the air, turned over, fell sharply, and buried its head in a bit of soft ground. Grôm felt that this was progress. The spectators opened their mouths in wonder, but durst not venture any comment when Grôm was at his mysteries.

Plucking the shaft from the earth, Grôm once more laid it to the bow-string. As he pulled the string, the shaft wobbled crazily. With a growl of impatience, he clapped the fore-finger of his left hand over it, holding it in place, and pulled it through the guide thus formed. A light flashed upon his brooding intelligence. Slightly crooking his finger, so that the shaft could move freely, he drew the string backward and forward, with deep deliberation, over and over again. To his delight, he found that the shaft was no longer eccentrically rebellious, but as docile as he could wish. At last, lifting the bow above his head, he drew it strongly, and shot the shaft into the air. He shouted as it slipped smoothly through the guiding crook of his finger and went soaring skyward as if it would never stop. The eyes of the spectators followed its flight with awe, and A-ya, suddenly comprehending, caught her breath and snatched the boy to her heart in a transport. Her alert mind grasped, though dimly, the wonder of her man's achievement.

Now, though Grôm had pointed his shaft skyward, he had taken no thought whatever as to its direction, or the distance it might travel. As a matter of fact, he had shot towards the Caves. He had shot strongly; and that first bow was a stiff one. Most of the folk who squatted before the Caves were watching; but there were some who were too indifferent or too stupid to take an interest in anything less arresting than a thump on the head. Among these was a fat old woman, who, with her back to all the excitement, was bending herself double to grub in the litter of sticks and bones for some tit-bit which she had dropped. Grôm's shaft, turning gracefully against the blue, came darting downward on a long slope, and buried its point in that up-turned fat and grimy thigh. With a yell the old woman whipped round, tore out the shaft, dashed it upon the ground, stared at it in horror as if she thought it some kind of snake, and waddled, wildly jabbering, into the nearest cave.

An outburst of startled cries arose from all the spectators, but it hushed itself almost in the same breath. It was Grôm who had done this singular thing, smiting unawares from very far off. The old woman must have done something to make Grôm angry. They were all afraid, and several, whose consciences were not quite at ease, followed the old woman's example and slipped into the Caves.

As for Grôm, his feelings were a mixture of embarrassment and elation. He was sorry to have hurt the old woman. He had a ridiculous dislike of hurting anyone unnecessarily; and when he looked back and saw A-ya rocking herself to and fro in heartless mirth, he felt like asking her how she would have liked it herself, if she had been in the place of the fat old woman. On the other hand, he knew that he had made a great discovery, second only to the conquest of the fire. He had found a new weapon, of unheard-of, unimagined powers, able to kill swiftly and silently and at a great distance. All he had to do was to perfect the weapon, and learn to control it.

An hour or two later, Grôm set out from the Caves, alone, in spite of A-ya's pleadings. He wanted complete solitude with his new weapon. Besides a generous bundle of canes, of varying lengths and sizes, he carried some strips of raw meat, a bunch of plantains, his spear and club, and a sort of rude basket, without handle, formed by tying together the ends of a roll of green bark.

This basket was a device of A-ya's, which had added greatly to her prestige

in the tribe, and caused the women to regard her with redoubled jealousy. By lining it thickly with wet clay, she was able to carry fire in it so securely and simply that Grôm had adopted it at once, throwing away his uncertain and always troublesome fire-tubes of hollow bamboo.

Mounting the steep hill-side behind the Caves, Grôm turned into a high, winding ravine, and was soon lost to the sight of the tribe. The ravine, the bed of a long-dry torrent, climbed rapidly, bearing around to the eastward, and brought him at length to a high plateau on a shoulder of the mountain. At the back of the plateau the mountain rose again, abruptly, to one of those saw-tooth pinnacles which characterised this range. At the base of the steep was a narrow fissure in the rock-face, leading into a small grotto which Grôm had discovered on one of his hunting expeditions. He had used it several times already as a retreat when tired of the hubbub of the tribe and anxious to ponder in quiet some of the problems which for ever tormented his fruitful brain.

Absorbed in meditations upon his new weapon, Grôm set himself to build a small fire before the entrance of the grotto. The red coals from his fire-basket he surrounded and covered with dry grass, dead twigs, and small sticks. Then, getting down upon all fours, he blew long and steadily into the mass till the smoke which curled up from it was streaked with thin flames. As the flames curled higher, his ears caught the sound of something stirring within the cave. He looked up, peering between the little coils of smoke, and saw a pair of eyes, very close to the ground, glaring forth at him from the darkness.

With one hand he coolly but swiftly fed the fire to fuller volume, while with the other he reached for and clutched his club. The eyes drew back slowly to the depths of the cave. Appearing not to have observed them, Grôm plied the fire with heavier and heavier fuel, till it was blazing strongly and full of well-lighted brands. Then he stood up, seized a brand, and hurled it into the cave. There was a harsh snarl, and the eyes disappeared, the owner of them having apparently shrunk off to one side.

A moment or two later the interior was suddenly lighted up with a smoky flare. The brand had fallen on a heap of withered grass which had formerly been Grôm's couch. Grôm set his teeth and swung up his club; and in the same instant there shot forth two immense cave hyenas, mad with rage and terror.

The great beasts were more afraid of the sudden flare within than of the substantial and dangerous fire without. The first swerved just in time to escape the fire, and went by so swiftly that the stroke of Grôm's club caught him only a fight, glancing blow on the rump. But the second of the pair, the female, was too close behind to swerve in time. She dashed straight through the fire, struck Grôm with all her frantic weight, knocked him flat, and tore off yelping down the valley, leaving a pungent trail of singed fur on the air.

Uninjured save for an ugly scratch, which bled profusely, down one side of his face, Grôm picked himself up in a rage and started after the fleeing beasts. But his common sense speedily reasserted itself. He grunted in disgust, turned back to the fire, and was soon absorbed in new experiments with the bow. As for the blaze within the cave, he troubled himself no more about it. He knew it would soon burn out. And it would leave the cave well cleansed of pestilential insects.

All that afternoon he experimented with his bundle of shafts, to find what length and what weight would give the best results. One of the arrows he shattered completely, by driving it, at short range, straight against the rock-face of the mountain. Two others he lost by shooting them, far beyond his expectations, over the edge of the plateau and down into the dense thickets below him, where he did not care to search too closely, by reason of the peril of snakes. The bow, as his good luck would have it, though short and clumsy, was very strong, being made of a stick of dry upland hickory. And the cord of raw hide was well-seasoned, stout and tough, though it

had a troublesome trick of stretching, which forced Grôm to restring it many times before all the stretch was out of it.

Having satisfied himself as to the power of his bow and the range of his arrows, Grôm set himself next to the problem of marksmanship. Selecting a plant of prickly pear, of about the dimensions of a man, he shot at it, at different ranges, till most of its great, fleshy leaves were shredded and shattered. With his straight eye and his natural aptitude, he soon grasped the idea of elevation for range, and made some respectable shooting. He also found that he could guide the arrow without crooking his finger around it. His elation was so extreme that he quite forgot to eat, till the closing in of darkness put an end to his practice. Then, piling high his fire as a warning to prowlers, he squatted in the mouth of the cave and made his meal. For water he had to go some little way below the lip of the plateau; but carrying a blazing balsam-knot he had nothing to fear from the beasts that lay in ambush about the spring. They slunk away sullenly at the approach of the waving flame.

That night Grôm slept securely, with three fires before his door. Every hour or two, vigilant woodsman that he was, he would wake up to replenish the fires, and be asleep again even in the act of lying down. And when the dawn came red and amber around the shoulder of the saw-toothed peak, he was up again and out into the chill, sweet air with his arrows.

The difficulty which now confronted him was that of giving his shafts a penetrating point. Being of a very hard-fibred cane, akin to bamboo, they would take a kind of splinter-point of almost needle sharpness. But it was fragile; and the cane being hollow, the point was necessarily on one side, which affected the accuracy of the flight. There were no flints in the neighbourhood, or slaty rocks, which he could split into edged and pointed fragments. He tried hardening his points in the fire, but the results were not altogether satisfactory. He thought of tipping some of the shafts with thorns, or with the steely points of the old aloe leaves; but he could not, at the moment, devise a method of fixing these formidable weapons in place that would not quite destroy their efficiency. Finally he made up his mind that the thing to use would be bone, ground into a suitable shape between two stones. But this was a matter that would have to await his return to the Caves, and would then call for much careful devising. For the present he would perforce content himself with such points as he had fined down and hardened in the fire.

This matter settled in his mind, Grôm burned to put his wonderful new weapon to practical test. He descended cautiously the steep slope from the eastern edge of his plateau—a broken region of ledges, sub-tropical thickets, and narrow, grassy glades, with here and there some tree of larger growth rising solitary like a watch-tower. Knowing this was a favourite feeding hour for many of the grass-eaters, he hid himself in the well-screened crotch of a deodar, overlooking a green glade, and waited.

He had not long to wait, for the region swarmed with game. Out from a runway some thirty or forty yards up the glade stepped a huge, dun-coloured bull, with horns like scimitars, each as long as Grôm's arm. His flanks were scarred with long wounds but lately healed, and Grôm realised that he was a solitary, beaten and driven out from his herd by some mightier rival. The bull glanced warily about him, and then fell to cropping the grass.

The beast offered an admirable target. Grôm's arrow sped noiselessly between the curtaining branches, and found its mark high up on the bull's fore-shoulder. It penetrated—but not to a depth of more than two or three inches. And Grôm, though elated by his good shot, realised that such a wound would be nothing more than an irritant.

Startled and infuriated, the bull roared and pawed the sod, and glared about him to locate his unseen assailant. He had not the remotest idea of the direction from which the strange attack had come. The galling smart in his shoulder grew momently more severe

He lashed back at it savagely with the side of his horn, but the arrow was just out of his reach. Then, bewildered and alarmed, he tried to escape from this new kind of fly with the intolerable sting by galloping furiously up and down the glade. As he passed the deodar, Grôm let drive another arrow, at close range. This, too, struck, and stuck. But it did not go deep enough to produce any serious effect. The animal roared again, stared about him as if he thought the place was bewitched, and plunged headlong into the nearest thicket, tearing out both arrows as he went through the close-set stems. Grôm heard him crashing onward down the slope, and smiled to think of the surprise in store for any antagonist that might cross the mad brute's path.

This experiment upon the wild bull had shown Grôm one thing clearly. He must arm his arrows with a more penetrating point. Until he could carry out his idea of giving them tips of bone, he must find some shoots of solid, pithless growth to take the place of his light hollow canes. For the next hour or two he searched the jungle carefully and warily, looking for a young growth that might immediately serve his purpose.

But there in the jungle everything that was hard enough was crooked or gnarled, everything that was straight enough was soft and sappy. It was not till the sun was almost over his head, and the heat was urging him back to the coolness of his grotto, that he came across something worth making a trial of. On a bleak wind-swept knoll far out on the mountain-side, lay the trunk of an old hickory-tree, which had evidently been shattered by lightning. From the roots, tenacious of life, had sprung up a throng of saplings, ranging from a foot or two in height to the level of Grôm's head. They were as straight and slim as the canes. And their hardness was proved to Grôm's satisfaction when he tried to break them off. They were tough, too, so that he almost lost his patience over them, before he learned that the best way to deal with them was to strip them down, in the direction of the fibre, where they sprang from the parent trunk or root. Having at length gathered an armful, he returned to his grotto and proceeded to shape the refractory butts in fire. As he squatted between the cave door and the fire he made his meal of raw flesh and plantains, and gazed out contemplatively over the vast, rankly-green landscape below him, musing upon the savage and monstrous strife which went on beneath that mask of wide-flung calm. And as he pondered, the fire which he had subjugated was quietly doing his work for him.

The result was beyond his utmost expectations. After judicious charring, the ends being turned continually in the glowing coals, he rubbed away the charred portions between two stones, and found that he could thus work up an evenly-rounded point. The point thus obtained was keen and hard; and as he balanced this new shaft in his hand he realised that its weight would add vastly to its power of penetration. When he tried a shot with it, he found that it flew farther and straighter. It drove through the tough, fleshy leaf of the prickly pear as if it hardly noticed the obstruction. He fashioned himself a half-dozen more of these highly-efficient shafts, and then set out again—this time down the ravine—to seek a living target for his practice.

The ravine was winding and of irregular width, terraced here and there with broken ledges, here and there cut into by steep little narrow gullies. Its bottom was in part bare rock; but wherever there was an accumulation of soil, and some tiny spring oozing up through the fissures, there the vegetation grew rank, starred with vivid blooms of canna and bibiscus. In many places the ledges were draped with a dense curtain of the flat-flowered pink-and-gold mesembryanthemum. It was a region well adapted to the ambuscading beasts; and Grôm moved stealthily as a panther, keeping for the most part along the upper ledges, crouching low to cross the open spots, and slipping into cover every few minutes to listen and peer and sniff.

Presently he came to a spot which seemed to offer him every advantage as

With no hint of comprehension in her bright eyes, A-ya looked upon the first bow—the stupendous product of a child and a woman playing (page 483).

adjacent ambush. It was a ledge some twenty feet above the valley level, with a sort of natural parapet, behind which he could crouch, and, unseen, keep an eye on all the glades and runways below. Behind him the rock-face was so nearly perpendicular that no enemy could steal upon him from the rear. He had his club and his spear flown beside him, selected one of his best arrows, and hoped that a fat buck would come by or one of those little spotted, two-toed horses whose flesh was so prized by the people of the Caves. Such a prize would be a proof to all the tribe of the potency of his new weapon.

For nearly an hour he waited, moveless, save for his ranging eyes, as the rock on which he leaned. To a hunter like Grom, schooled to infinite patience, this was nothing. He knew that, in the wilds, if one waits long enough and keeps still enough, he is bound to see something interesting. At last it came. It was neither the fat buck nor the little two-toed horse with dappled hide, but a young cow-buffalo. Grom noticed at once that she seemed nervous and puzzled. She seemed to suspect that she was being followed, and was undecided what to do. Once she faced about angrily, staring into the coverts behind her, and made as if to charge. Had she been an old cow, or a bull, she would have charged; but her inexperience made her irresolute. She snorted, faced about again, and moved on, ears erect and with nostrils contemptuous of wrathful interrogation. She was well within range, and Grom would have tried a shot at her except for his seasoned wariness. He would rather see, before revealing himself, what for it was that dared to trail so dangerous a quarry. The buffalo moved on slowly out of range, and vanished down a runway, and immediately afterwards the stealthy pursuer came in view.

To Grom's amazement, it was neither a lion nor a bear. It was a man of his own tribe. And then he saw it was none other than the great chief, Bawr himself, hunting alone after his haughty and daring fashion. Between Grom and Bawr there was the fullest understanding, and Grom would have whistled that plover cry, his private signal, but for the risk of interfering with Bawr's chase. Once more, therefore, he held himself in check, while Bawr, his eyes easily reading the trail, crept on with the soundless step of a wild cat.

But Grom was not the only hunter lying in ambush in the sun-drenched ravine. Out from a bed of giant, red-blooming canna arose the diabolical, grinning head and monstrous shoulders of a sabre-tooth, and stared after Bawr. Then the whole body emerged with a noiseless bound. For a second the gigantic beast stood there, with one paw uplifted, its goblin tawny bulk seeming to quiver in the downpour of intense sunlight. It was a third as tall again at the shoulders as the biggest Himalayan tiger, its head was flat-skulled like a tiger's, and its upper jaw was armed with two long, yellow, sabre-like tusks, projecting downwards below the lower jaw. This appalling monster started after Bawr with a swift, crouching rush, as silent, for all its weight, as if its feet were shod with thistle-down.

Grom leapt to his feet with a wild yell of warning at the same time letting fly an arrow. In his haste the shaft went wide. Bawr, looking over his shoulder, saw the giant beast almost upon him. With a tremendous bound he gained the foot of a tree. Dropping his club and spear, he sprang desperately, caught a branch, and swung himself upward.

But the sabre-tooth was already at his heels. Before he had time to swing quite out of reach. The gigantic brute gathered itself for a spring which would have enabled it to pluck Bawr from his refuge like a ripe fig. But that spring was never delivered. With a roar of rage the monster turned instead, and bit furiously at the shaft of an arrow sticking in its flank. Grom's second shaft had flown true, and Bawr, greatly marvelling, drew up his legs to a place of safety.

With the bite of that deep wound in its entrails the sabre-tooth forgot all about its quarry in the tree. It had caught sight of Grom when he uttered his yell of warning, and it knew instantly whence the strange attack had come. It bit off the protruding shaft;

Lifting it above his head he drew it strongly and shot the shaft into the air (page 485).

Leaning far out over the parapet, he drew his arrow to the head and let drive just as the monster reared itself, open-jawed, at the wall (page 493).

and then, fixing its dreadful eyes on Grôm, it ceased its snarling and came charging for the ledge with a rush which seemed likely to carry it clear up the twenty-foot perpendicular of smooth rock.

Grôm, enamoured of the new weapon, forgot the spear which was likely to be far more efficient at these close quarters. Leaning far out over the parapet, he drew his arrow to the head and let drive just as the monster reared itself, open-jawed, at the wall. The pointed hickory went down into the gaping gullet, and stood out some inches at the side of the neck. With a horrible coughing screech the monster recoiled, put its head between its paws, and tried to claw the anguish from its throat. But after a moment, seeming to realise that this was impossible, it backed away, gathered itself together, and sprang for the ledge. It received another of Grôm's shafts deep in the chest, without seeming to notice the wound; and its impetus was so tremendous that it succeeded in getting its fore-paws fixed upon the ledge. Clinging there, its enormous pale-green eyes staring straight into Grôm's, it struggled to draw itself up all the way—an effort in which it would doubtless have succeeded at once but for that first arrow in its entrails. The iron claws of its hinder feet rasped noisily on the rock-face.

Grôm dropped his bow beside him and reached for the spear. His hand grasped the club instead; but there was no time to change. Swinging the stone-head weapon high in air, he brought it down, with a grunt of huge effort, full upon one of those giant paws which clutched the edge of the parapet. Crushed and numbed, the grip of that paw fell away; but at the same moment one of the hinder paws got over the edge, and clung. And there the monster hung, its body bent in a contorted bow.

Bawr, meanwhile, seeing Grôm's peril, had dropped from his tree, snatched up his spear and club, and rushed in to the rescue. It was courage, this, of the finest, counting no odds; for down there on the level he would have stood no ghost of a chance had the beast turned back upon him. Grôm yelled to him to keep away, and swung up his club for another shattering blow. But in that same moment the great glaring eyes filmed and rolled upwards; blood spouted from between the gaping jaws; and with a spluttering cough the monster lost its hold. It fell, with a soft but jarring thud, upon its back, and slowly rolled over upon its side, pawing the air aimlessly. The arrow in the throat had done its work.

With fine self-restraint Bawr refrained from striking, that he might seem to usurp no share in Grôm's amazing achievement. He stood leaning upon his spear, calmly watching the last feeble paroxysms, till Grôm came scrambling down from the ledge and stood beside him. He took the bow and the arrows, and examined them in silence. The he turned upon Grôm with burning eyes.

"You found the Fire for our people. You saved our people from the hordes of the Tree Men. You have saved my life now, slaying the monster from very far off with these little sticks which you have made. It is you who should be Chief, not I."

Grôm laughed and shook his head. "Bawr is the better man of us two," said he positively, "and he is a better chief. He governs the people, while I go away and think new things. And he is my friend. Look, I will teach him now this new thing. And we will make another just like it, that when we return to the Caves Bawr also shall know how to strike from very far off."

With their rough-edged spear-heads of flint they set themselves to the skinning of the sabre-tooth. Then they went back to the high plateau, where Bawr was taught to shoot a straight shaft. And on the following day they returned to the fires of the tribe, carrying between them, shoulder high, slung upon their two spears, this first trophy of the bow, the monstrous head and hide of the sabre-tooth.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

THE DESTROYING SPLENDOUR

A STORY OF WHEN EARTH WAS YOUNG

By Charles G D Roberts
Illustrated by
Frank Verbeck

TO Grôm, the Cave Man, hunting farther to the south of the Tribal Fires than he had ever ranged before, came suddenly a woman running, mad with fright, a baby clutched to her bosom. She fell at Grôm's feet, gibbering breathlessly, and plainly imploring his protection. Both she and the child were streaming with blood, and covered with strange cup-like wounds, as if the flesh had been gouged out of them with some irresistible circular instrument.

Grôm swiftly fitted an arrow to his bow, and peered through the trees to see what manner of adversary the fugitive was like to bring upon him. At the same time he gave a piercing cry, which was answered at once from some distance behind him.

Having satisfied himself (the country being fairly open) that the woman's pursuer, whatever it might be, was not close upon her heels, and that no immediate danger was in view, he turned his attention upon the woman herself. She was not of his race, and he looked down upon her with cold aversion. At first glance he thought she was one of the Tree Folk. But the colour of her skin, where it could be seen for the blood, was different, being rather of a copper-red; and she was neither so hairy on the body nor of such ape-like proportions. She was sufficiently hideous, however, and of some race inferior to the People of the Caves.

Knowing a few words of the Tree Men's tongue, which he had learned from his lame slave Ookootsk, he addressed the crouching woman, telling her not to fear. The tongue was unintelligible to her, but the tones of his voice seemed to reassure her. She sat up, and Grôm noted with keen interest that the child also had ona of those terrible cup-shaped wounds,

All rights reserved. Copyrighted in U.S.A. by C. G. D. Roberts, 1914

almost obliterating its fat, copper-coloured shoulder. He saw, also, that the woman's face, though uncomely, was more intelligent and human than the bestial faces of the Tree Women. It was a broad face, with very small deep-set eyes, high cheek-bones, a tiny nose, and a very wide mouth, and it looked as if someone had sat on it hard and pushed it in. The idea made him smile, and the smile completed the woman's reassurance. She poured out a stream of chatter quite unlike the clicks and barkings of the Tree Folk. Then she crept closer to Grôm's feet, and proceeded to give her little one the breast.

As Grôm stood studying the pair, the mother kept throwing glances of horror over her shoulder, as if expecting her assailants to arrive at any moment. Grôm followed her eyes, but there was no sign of any pursuit. Then he observed the fugitives' wounds more closely, and noted that the blood upon them was already, in most cases, pretty well coagulated. He noted also certain other wounds, deep, narrow punctures, like stabs. He guessed that they could not be much less than an hour old. The Thing, whatever it was, which had inflicted them—the Thing with so strange a mouth and so strange a way of using it—had apparently given up the pursuit. Grôm's curiosity burned within him, and he was angry at the woman because she could not speak to him in his own language, or at least in that of the Tree Men. He stooped over her, and roughly examined one of the wounds with his huge fingers. She winced, but made no complaint, only covering her baby with her hair and her arms in terror lest it should suffer a like harsh handling.

With a qualm of compunction, which rather puzzled him, Grôm gave over his investigating, and turned to a tall, slim youth with a great mop of chestnut hair who at this moment came running up to him. It was A-ya's young brother, Mô, Grôm's favourite follower and hunting mate; and he had come at speed, being very swift of foot, in answer to Grôm's signal. Breathing quickly, he stood at Grôm's side, and looked down with wonder and dislike upon the crouching woman.

Briefly Grôm explained, and then pointed to the inexplicable wounds. The youth, unable to believe that any human creature should be unable to comprehend plain human speech, such as that of the Cave People, tried his own hand at questioning the woman. He got a flow of chatter in reply, but, being able to make nothing out of it, he imagined it was not speech at all, and turned away angrily, thinking that she mocked him. Grôm, smiling at the mistake, explained that the woman was talking her own language, which he would presently learn as he had learned that of the Tree Men.

"But now," said he, "we will go and see what it is that has hitten the woman. It is surely something with a strange mouth."

Mô, who would have followed Grôm through the mouth of hell, sprang forward eagerly. Grôm, who realised that the mystery before him was a perilous one, looked to his bow-string and saw that his arrows were handy in his girdle, before he started on the venture. Besides his bow he carried the usual two spears and his inseparable stone-headed club. Though danger was his delight, it was not the danger itself but the thrill of overcoming it that he loved.

The moment he stepped forward, however, the woman divined his purpose and leapt wildly to her feet. She sprang straight in front of him, screaming and gesticulating. To Grôm's keen intelligence her gestures were eloquent. She managed to convey to him the idea of great numbers, and the impossibility of his dealing with them. When he attempted to pass her, she threw herself down and clung to his feet, shaking with her terror. When she saw that Grôm was at last impressed, she stretched herself out as if dead, and then, after a few moments of ghastly rigidity, with fixed, staring eyes, she came to and held up one hand with the fingers outspread.

This frantic pantomime Grôm could read in no other way than as an attempt to tell him that the unknown Something

She fell at Gròm's feet, gibbering breathlessly, and plainly imploring his protection (*page 603*).

had killed five of the woman's companions. The information gave him pause. Adventurous as he was, he had small respect for mere pig-headed recklessness. He was resolved to solve the problem,—but after all it could abide his more thorough preparation.

"Come back," he ordered, turning to the impetuous Mô. "She says they are too many for us two. They have killed five of her people. We will go back to the Caves, and after three sleeps for good counsel, we will return with fire and find the destroying Thing."

II

On their return to the Caves, Grôm gave the stranger woman and her baby to his faithful slave Ookootsk, who accepted the gift with enthusiasm because, being a Tree Man, he had not been allowed to take any of the Cave Women to wife. He lavished his attentions upon the unhappy stranger, but he could make no more of her speech than Grôm had done. The girl A-ya, however, in a moment of peculiar insight had gathered, or thought she gathered, from the stranger's signs, that the dreadful and destroying Thing was something that flew—therefore, a great flesh-eating bird. But she gathered, also, that it was something which in some way bore a resemblance to fire—for the woman, after getting over her first terror of the dancing flames, kept pointing to them and then to her wounds in a most suggestive way.

With so provocative a mystery waiting to be solved, Grôm could not long rest idle. Had she not known well it would be a waste of breath, A-ya would have tried to dissuade him from the perilous, and to her mind profitless, adventure. It was one she shrank from in spite of her tried courage and her unwavering trust in Grôm's prowess. The mystery of it daunted her. But she kept her fears to herself, and claimed her long-established right to go with Grôm on the expedition. Grôm was willing enough, for there was no one whose readiness and nerve, in a supreme crisis, he could so depend upon, and he wanted her close at hand with her fire-basket.

It was a very little party which started southward from the Caves—simply Grôm, A-ya, young Mô, and a dwarfish kinsman of Grôm's, named Loob, who was the swiftest runner in the tribe and noted for his cunning as a scout. He could go through underbrush like a shadow, and hide where there was apparently no hiding-place, making himself indistinguishable from his surroundings like a squatting partridge. Each one carried a bow, two light spears, and a club,—except A-ya, who had no club, and only one spear. The weapon she chiefly relied upon was the bow, which she loved with passion. She considered herself the inventor of it; and in the accuracy of her shooting she outdid even Grôm. In addition to these weapons, each member of the party except the leader himself carried a fire-basket, in which a mass of red coals mixed with punk smouldered in a bed of moist clay.

The little expedition travelled Indian file, Grôm leading the way, with A-ya at his heels, then Loob the scout, and young Mô bringing up the rear. They had started about dawn, when the first of the morning rose was just beginning to pale the cave-mouth fires. When it wanted perhaps an hour of noon, they came to a little patch of meadow surrounding a solitary Judas-tree covered with bloom. Here they built a fire, for the replenishing of the coals in the fire-baskets, and as a menace to prowling beasts. Then they dined on their sun-dried meat and on ripe plantains gathered during the journey. Having dined, the three younger members of the party stretched themselves out in the shade for their noon sleep, while Grôm, whose restless brain never suffered him to sleep by day, kept watch, and pondered the adventure which lay before them.

That afternoon toward sundown the expedition reached the point where the fugitive had made her appeal to Grôm. For fear of giving information to the unknown enemy, no fires were lighted. The night was passed in a dense and lofty tree-top. For Grôm, strung up

with excitement, suspense and curiosity, there was little sleep. For the most part he perched on his woven platform with his arms about his knees, listening to the sounds of the night—the occasional sudden rush of a hunting beast, the agonised scream and scuffle, the gurglings and noisy slaverings that told of the unseen tragedies enacted far down in the murderous dark. But there was no sound novel to his own experience. Once there came a scratching of claws and a sniffing at the base of the tree. But Grôm dropped a live coal from his fire basket, and chanced to make a lucky shot. With a snarl some heavy body bounced away from the tree. The coal then fell into a tuft of dry grass, which flared up suddenly. Grôm had a glimpse of huge shapes and startled, savage eyes hacking away from the circle of light. The blaze died down as quickly as it had arisen; and thereafter the night prowlers kept at a distance from the tree. But the sleepers had all been thoroughly aroused, and till dawn they sat discussing, for the hundredth time, the chances of the morrow's venture.

Before the sun was clear of the horizon, the little party was again upon the march, but now going with the wariness of a sable. They no longer went Indian file, but flitting singly from tree to tree, from covert to covert, Grôm picking up the old trail of the fugitive, the rest of the party keeping him in view and peering ahead for some sign of the unknown Terror. The red woman in her flight had left a sharp trail enough; but in the lapse of three days it had become so obliterated that all Grôm's woodcraft was needed to decipher it, and his progress was slow. He began to be puzzled at the absence of any other trail, of any footsteps of a mysterious, unknown monster. Such tracks as crossed those of the fugitive, however terrible, were all familiar to his eye.

Suddenly he almost stumbled over a hideous sight. A low whistle brought his followers closing in upon him. The skeleton of a full-grown man lay outstretched in the grass. The bones were fresh—blood-stained and bright—and a swarm of blood-sucking insects arose from them. They were picked minutely clean, except for a portion of the skull, where the long, strong, densely-matted hair seemed to have served as an effective armour. The bones were not pulled about, or crushed for their marrow, as they would have been if the victim had been the prey of any of the great carnivorous beasts. And there were no tracks about save those of a few small rat-like creatures. It was clear that the Mystery, whatever it might be, had wings.

"A bird!" whispered A-ya, with a gleam of triumph in her eyes, at the same time glancing up into the tree-tops apprehensively. But Grôm did not think so. There were no marks of mighty claws on the turf around the skeleton.

Grôm cast about him an eager but anxious eye. The country was not densely wooded at this point, but studded with low thickets, and set here and there with scattered trees. From a little way ahead came a gleam of calm water through the greenery. It was a scene of peace and security and summer loveliness. Its very beauty seemed to Grôm an added menace, as if some peculiar treachery must lurk behind it.

In the centre of an open glade, not far from the skeleton, Grôm set his party to building a circle of fires, as likely to afford the surest kind of a refuge. A supply of fuel having been gathered, he directed A-ya and Mô to remain and tend the fires and not to leave the circle unless he should summon them. Loob, the cunning scout, he sent off to the left through the underbrush. He himself followed the trail of the fugitive—now doubled by that of the other fugitive whose skeleton lay there in the sun—down toward that gleam of water through the trees. A-ya gazed after him anxiously as he vanished, half minded to dare his displeasure and follow him.

Grôm was presently able to make out that the water was a wide, reedy lake or the arm of a shallow river. There was no wind, and the surface shone like clear glass. But once and again his eyes were dazzled by a dart of intense radiance, a great flash of rose or violet or

blue-green flame, shooting over the surface of the water. A memory of what A-ya had professed to gather from the stranger woman rushed into his mind. Perhaps the Destroying Thing *was* like a bird, and nevertheless, at the same time, something like fire. He felt himself confronted by a mystery which made even his tried nerves creep; and hid himself in the densest undergrowth as he stole forward toward the water. He had forgotten, and forsaken, the trail he was following, in his haste to solve the problem of those darting splendours.

A few moments more and he gained the edge of an open glade which led straight to the water. He paused behind the screening leaves. Out over the water a bar of ruby light, surrounded by a globe of rose-pink mist, shot by and vanished out of his narrow field of vision. He was just about to thrust forth his head and crane his neck to follow the gorgeous apparition, when a peculiar dry rustling in the air above checked him. He glanced up cautiously, and saw hovering, not more than twenty or thirty yards away, a beautiful and dreadful being.

In shape it was exactly like a dragon-fly; but the length of its flaming violet body was greater than that of Grôm's longest arrow. The spread of its two pairs of transparent, crystal-shining, colourless wings was even greater than the length of its body. Its enormous eyes, wells of purple fire which took up the whole of the top and sides of its monstrous head, seemed to see everywhere at once; and Grôm shivered with the feeling that they had spied him out and were peering into his very soul.

The awful eyes may have seen him, indeed, but at that moment they spied out something else which apparently concerned them more. With a pounce like a flash of violet lightning—and, indeed, almost as swift—the bright shape swooped to the grass. The four shining wings waved there for a moment in what seemed to be a mild struggle. Then the giant fly rose again, lightly, into the air, holding in the clutch of its six slender, jointed legs the body of one of those black, rat-like animals which Grôm knew so well as infesting the grass of all meadows near water. The captor flew to a naked branch near the waterside, alighted upon it, and proceeded to make its meal, holding up the body between the end joints of its front pair of legs and turning it over and over deftly while its appalling jaws both crushed and mangled it. The process was amazingly swift. In the space of a couple of minutes all the blood, flesh, and soft material of the rat were squeezed out and sucked down. The remnants were rolled into a hard little ball, perfectly spherical, and scornfully tossed aside. And the monster, leaping into the air with a rustle of its glittering wings, flashed off over the water.

Almost in the same moment an amazingly loud clatter, like the sweep of a fierce gust of rain upon a rank of palmetto leaves, filled the air above the glade, and Grôm, looking up with a start, saw a great shoal of the radiant shapes storm by, as if with the rainbow entangled in their wings. He wondered upon what foray they were bent; and now for the first time he realised, with a creeping of the flesh, what fate it was that had overtaken the man whose skeleton he had found in the grass. The shoal swept out over the lake a little way, and then on down the shore toward the left; and Grôm drew a long breath as he assured himself that their course was taking them far from the fires of A-ya and Mô.

When Grôm lowered his eyes to earth again he started. On the side of the stump of a fallen tree, out in the glade not more than eight or ten yards distant, clung one of the monsters, scintillating blue-green and violet in the full blaze of the sun. Its wings, exquisitely netted and of crystal transparency, were tinged with an ineffable purple iridescence. Its jointed body, slightly longer than Grôm's arm, was nearly as thick as his wrist, and ended at the tail with a formidable double claw. Its six legs, arranged in three pairs under the thorax, were armed on the inner sides with powerful spines, needle-pointed and steel hard, with which to grip and hold its victims. The thorax, from the back of which sprouted the four great

Grôm reached up his left hand, caught his dreadful assailant just where the head and thorax join, and strove to throttle it (page 610).

wings, was of the thickness of Grôm's fore-arm, while its head was as big as Grôm's two huge fists put together. It was this head which held Grôm's fascinated gaze, giving him more of the sensation of cold fear than he had ever known before. More than two-thirds of the head consisted of a pair of vast, globose eyes, without pupil, ethereally transparent, yet unfathomable. From the depths of them flamed a ceaselessly changing radiance of blue-green, purple and violet. Grôm found the stare of those blank, pupilless eyes almost intolerable.

It was plainly straight at him, through the ineffectual screen of the leafage, that the dreadful insect was staring. At first it stared with the back of its head. Then, very deliberately, it turned its head completely around, without moving its body a hair's breadth, till its mouth was in the same plane with its back. This gave Grôm a sense of disgust, and his shrinking dread began to give way to a sort of rage.

Then he took note of the monster's mouth—and understood those great cup-shaped wounds on the woman and the child. The mouth took up the remaining third of the head, and seemed to consist of globular discs working one over the other, so as either to cut cleanly or grind. They were working, slowly, now—and Grôm felt suddenly that he must put a stop to it, that he must put out the awful light in those monstrous devil eyes. Stealthily, almost imperceptibly, he fitted an arrow to his bow, raised it, drew it, and took a long, steady aim. He must not miss. The shaft flew—and the great fly was pinned, through the thorax, to the soft, rotten wood of its perch.

To Grôm's horror that stroke, which to any beast he knew would have at once been fatal, did not kill the monstrous fly. Its struggles and the beating of its four great wings, were so violent that the arrow-head was presently wrenched loose from its hold in the wood, and the raging splendour, with the shaft half-way through its thorax, bounded into the air. It darted straight at Grôm, who had prudently edged in among a tangle of stems. Its fury carried it through the screen of leafage,—but then, its wings impeded by the branches, and the arrow hampering it, it dashed itself to the earth. Instantly Grôm was upon it, stamping the slim body, as it lay there blazing and quivering, into the soil. The violet light in the huge, pupilless eyes still stared up at him implacable, from a head turned around squarely over the back. But in a cold fury Grôm shattered the gleaming head with his club. Then he trod the silver wings to dust.

Having slaked his wrath effectually, Grôm turned to stare forth again at those destroying splendours darting and glittering above the surface of the lake. To his surprise there were no more of them to be seen. Then far off down the shore he heard the voice of Loob, shouting for help. The shouting changed at once to a scream of terror, and Grôm started to the rescue on the full run—taking care, however, to keep within cover of the thickets. But before he had gone a quarter of a mile he heard A-ya's voice calling him, wildly, insistently, mingled with excited yells from Mô. He shouted in reply and dashed madly for the fires. The peril of A-ya put all other considerations out of his mind.

As he burst forth into the glade of refuge, he saw A-ya and young Mô leaping about frantically among their fires, now trying to stir the flames to a fiercer blaze, now beating upwards with their spears, while above them darted and gleamed and swooped and scintillated, with a horrid dry clashing of their silver wings, shoal upon shoal of the devouring monsters. As he broke into the open, with a great shout of encouragement, something dropped upon him. He felt his head instantly caged by six steel-like legs which gripped like jaws, their spines sinking deep into the flesh of neck and cheek. He reached up his left hand, caught his dreadful assailant just where the head and thorax join, and strove to throttle it. This was impossible, by reason of the insect's armour, but he succeeded in holding off those horrid jaws from his face as he dashed for the circle. An-

other monster swooped and struck its spines into his back, and bit a great mouthful out of his shoulder. But he gained the fires, and, holding his breath, sprang right through the fiercest flame. The wings of his assailants shrivelled instantly, and the flame, drawn into the mouths of their breathing tubes, suffocated them. Grôm tore them off, and slammed the writhing, wingless bodies into the fire.

Inside the circle, now that the fires were burning high, it was possible to defend oneself effectually, as the bulk of the assailants seemed to realise that the flames were fatal to their frail wings. But there were enough so headlong in their ferocity that both Grôm and Mô were kept busy beating them off with spears, while A-ya fed the fires; and the ground inside the circle was littered with the radiant bodies of the dying insects, which, even in dying, bit like bull-dogs if foot or leg came within reach. The far-off screams of Loob, which had been ringing in their ears, had now stopped. Then Grôm noticed that their supply of fuel was all but gone, and his heart sank. He measured with his eyes the distance to the nearest thickets that looked dense enough for a shelter.

"We'll have to run for those bushes," he said presently. "They can't fly in where the branches are thick. It breaks their wings."

"Good," said young Mô. But A-ya, whose shapely shoulders and thighs were already covered with hideous wounds, trembled at the prospect.

At that moment, however, an amazing change came over the scene. A black thunder-cloud passed across the face of the sun. The moment the sunshine vanished the destroyers seemed to forget their fury. All the life and energy went out of them. They simply flocked to the nearest trees and hung themselves up, gigantic, jewelled blooms, upon the branches. In less than a minute every dreadful wing was stilled.

"Now is our time. Come!" commanded Grôm, leading the way out of the circle.

"Let's stop and kill them all!" pleaded young Mô, his eyes red with rage.

But Grôm pointed to the cloud. "It will pass quickly," said he. "We must be far from here before the sun shows his face again."

He paused, however, to transfix upon his spear-head one of their wounded but still fluttering foes, that he might be able to show the tribe what manner of monster they had had to deal with. Both A-ya and Mô followed his example; and they all ran off down the glade bearing their strange trophies on their spear-heads. The monsters, clinging sullenly to their perches, rolled baleful eyes of emerald and rose and amethyst upon them as they went, but lifted never a wing to follow them. Ten minutes later the sun came out again. Then the monsters all sprang hurtling into the air, and darted hither and thither above the glade in shoals of iridescent radiance, seeking their prey. But Grôm and A-ya and Mô, triumphant in spite of their wounds, were by this time far away among the inland thickets, where those intolerable eyes could not search them out, nor the clashing wings pursue.

C. G. D. Roberts.

The Terrors of the Dark

A Complete Story of When Earth Was Young

by Charles G. D. Roberts

Illustrated by Frank Verbeck

FROM the topmost summit of that range of pointed hills, which held the caves and the cave-mouth fires of his people, Grôm, the Cave Man, stared northward with keen curiosity. To east, and south, and west, he had explored, ever seeking to enlarge the knowledge and strengthen the security of his tribe. But to northward of the Pointed Hills lay league on league of profound jungle — grotesque and enormous growths knitted together impenetrably by a tangle of gigantic, flame-flowered lianas. And in those rank, green glooms, as Grôm had reason to believe, there lurked such monsters as even he, with all his resources of fire and novel weapons, had so far shrunk from challenging.

But beyond the expanse of jungle stretched another line of hills, their summits not saw-toothed like his own, but low and gently rounded, and of a smoky purple against the pure turquoise sky. These hills Grôm was thirsting to explore. They might contain caves more roomy than those of his own hills—spacious and suitable to give shelter to his tribe which was now finding itself somewhat cramped. Moreover, it had always seemed to Grôm that there might be a mystery behind those hills, and to his restless imagination a mystery was always a stinging goad.

In all this neighbourhood the crust of earth was thin, as plainly appeared from the fringe of wavering volcanic flames which, during all the five years since the coming of the tribe, had been dancing from the lip of the narrow fissure across the mouth of their valley. Night and day, now high and vehement, now low and faint, they had danced there, guarding the valley entrance—until just one moon ago. Then had come an earthquake, shaking the hearts of all the tribe to water. The dancing flames had died. The fissure had closed up, and its place had been taken by a pool of boiling pitch. And one of the caves had fallen in, burying several members of the tribe who had been too

All rights reserved. Copyrighted in U.S.A., 1914

stupefied with panic to flee into the open at the first alarm. For some days after this catastrophe, the tribe had camped in the open, huddled about their great fires. Then, with misgivings, they had all crowded back into the remaining caves, and at last it had been settled that Grôm should lead a party through the jungle land to those other hills, to spy out the prospect.

As was his custom when on a perilous venture, Grôm would have few followers to share the peril with him. He took the girl A-ya, not only because of her oft-proved courage and resourcefulness, not only because he wanted her always at his side, but above all because he knew he could not leave her behind. Had he tried to leave her, she would have disobeyed and followed him by stealth, and perhaps fallen a prey to prowling beasts. He took also A-ya's young brother, the hothead Mô; and Loob, the shaggy little sharp-faced scout, who could run like a hare, hide like a fox, and fight like a cornered weasel. This he would have accounted, ordinarily, a sufficient party. But the present enterprise being one of peculiar difficulty, he decided at the last moment to strengthen his following by the addition of a dark-faced, perpetually grinning giant named Hobbo, who was slow of wit, but hewed like a bull, and a mighty fighter with the stone-headed club.

This little but greatly daring band which Grôm, one flaming sunrise, led down into the unknown jungle, was armed as no human expedition had been armed before that time. Besides the spear and the club, each member of the party but Hobbo (who had displayed no aptitude for its use) carried Grôm's wonderful invention, the bow. Hobbo, however, because of his immense strength, bore the heavy fire-basket, wherein smouldering coals were cherished in a bed of clay, covered over with damp moss. As a food reserve, everyone carried a few strips of half-dried meat; but their main dependence, of course, was to be upon the spoils of their hunting and the fruits that they might gather on their march.

The forest into whose depths Grôm now led the way was in reality a sort of survival from a previous age, into which the forms, both vegetable and animal, of contemporary life had been gradually infiltrating. The soil, of incredible fertility, still poured forth those gigantic tree grasses, and colossal, sappy ferns and pseudo-palms, which had flourished chiefly in the carboniferous period. But here they were mingled with the more enduring hard-wood growths of the later tropical forests—and only these were strong enough to support the massive, strangling coils of the cable-like lianas, which wound their way up the huge trunks and reached out in aërial, swaying bridges from tree-top to tree-top. On every side, high or low, the deep green gloom was splashed with colour from the gorgeous orchids and other epiphytes, which flowered out into grotesque or monstrous wing-petalled shapes of vermilion and purple and orange and rose and white, eyed with velvet black or streaked with iridescent bronze.

To men of to-day, this jungle would have been impenetrable, except by the incessant use of axe or *machete*. But Grôm and his party were Cave Men, and had not yet forgotten all the instincts and capacities of their tree-dwelling ancestors. Sometimes, where it seemed easiest, they forced their way along the ground, or followed the trodden trail of some great jungle beast so long as it led in the right direction, but, whenever possible, they preferred to journey, after the fashion of their apish ancestors, by way of the high branches and the liana bridges.

That night, they slept profoundly on a platform which they wove of boughs in one of the tallest and most unscalable trees.

On the morrow, as they were pursuing their aërial path along the borders of a narrow, sluggish *bayou*, it was brought home to them again, more forcibly than before, that even here in the tree-tops they were by no means safe. They were all staring down into the water, which swarmed with gigantic crocodiles, when a harsh jabbering in the tree-tops just across the water made them look up.

When the moon rose, travelling through the tree-

The tree-tops opposite were full of great apes, mowing and gibbering at them with every sign of hate. The beasts were as big and massive as Hobbo himself, and covered thickly with long blackish fur. Their faces, half human, half dog-like, were hairless and of a bright but bilious blue, with great, livid red circles about the small, furious eyes. With derisive gestures, they swung out upon the overhanging branches, till it almost seemed as if they would hurl themselves into the water in their rage against the little knot of human beings.

The girl A-ya, overcome with loathing horror because the beasts were so hideous a caricature of man, covered her eyes with one hand. Young Mô, his fiery temper stung by their challenge, clapped an arrow to his string and raised his bow to shoot. But Grôm checked him sternly, dreading to fix any thirst of vengeance in the minds of the terrible troop.

"They can't come at us here. Let them forget about us," said he. "Don't take any more notice of them at all."

As he led the way once more through the branches along the edge of the *bayou*, the apes kept pace with them on the other side. But presently the *bayou* widened, and then swept sharply off to the west. Grôm kept on straight to the north, by the route which he had planned. And the mad gibbering died away into the hot green silence of the tree-tops.

The adventurers now pushed on with redoubled speed, unwilling to pass another night in the tree-tops with such dangerous antagonists in the neighbourhood. The hills, however, were still far off when evening came again. Not knowing that the great apes always slept at night, Grôm decided to continue the journey in order to lessen the risk of a surprise. When the moon rose, round and huge and honey-coloured, over the sea of foliage, travelling through the tree-tops was almost

tops was almost as easy as by day (page 712).

as easy as by day, while the earth below them, with its prowling and battling monsters, was buried in inky gloom.

When day broke, there were the rounded hills startlingly close ahead, as if they had crept forward to meet them in the night. Between the nearest—a long, low, treeless ridge of down-land—and the edge of the jungle, lay an expanse of open, grassy savannah, dotted with ponds, and here and there a curious, solitary, naked tree-trunk with what looked like a bunch of grass on its top. They were like gigantic green paint-brushes, with yellow-grey handles stuck up at random. Far off they saw a herd of curious beasts at pasture; and away to the left a giant bird, as tall as the tree by which it stood, seemed to keep watch. A little to the right, where the treeless ridge came abruptly to an end, gleamed a wide stretch of water. It was toward this point, where the water washed the steep-shouldered promontory, that Grôm decided to shape his course across the plain.

By the time the sun was some three hours high, they had arrived within a couple of hundred yards of the open. Sick of the oppressive jungle, and eager for the change to a type of country with which they were more familiar, they were swinging on through the tree-tops at a great pace, when that savage, snarling jabber which they dreaded was heard in the branches behind them. Grôm instantly put A-ya in the lead, while he himself dropped to the rear to meet this deadliest of perils. There was no need to urge his party to haste. It seemed to them all as if they were standing still, so swiftly did the clamour of the apes come up upon them.

"Down to earth," ordered Grôm sharply, seeing that they must be overtaken before they could reach the open, and realising that in the branches they could not hope to match these four-handed dwellers of the trees.

As they dropped nimbly from branch to branch, the foremost of the apes

arrived in sight, set up a screech of triumph, and came swooping down after them in vast, swinging leaps. In the hurry, Hobbo dropped his fire-basket, which broke as it fell and scattered the precious coals. Grôm, guarding the rear of the flight, made the mistake of keeping his eye too much on the enemy, too little on where he was going. In a moment or two, he found himself cut off upon a branch from which there was no escape without a drop of twenty feet to a most uncertain foothold. Rather than risk it, he ran in upon his nearest assailant, at the base of the branch, thrusting at the loathsome blue face with his spear. But his position being so insecure, his thrust lacked force and precision. The great ape caught it deftly; and Grôm, to preserve his balance, had to let the weapon be wrenched from his hand and thrown to the ground. At the same moment, another ape dropped on the branch behind him.

For just one second, Grôm thought his hour had come. He crouched to steady himself, then darted forward and hurled his club straight at his foe's protruding and shaggy paunch. Again the beast caught the missile in its lightning clutch; but in the next instant, it threw up its long arms, without a sound, and fell backwards out of the tree. The girl A-ya, who had been the first to reach the ground, had drawn her bow and shot upwards with sure aim. The shaft had caught the great ape under the centre of the jaw, far back at the throat, and pierced straight up to the brain.

Surprised at seeing their leader fall, with so little apparent reason, the other apes halted for a moment in their onset, chattering noisily. In that moment, Grôm swung himself to the ground. As he reached it, both Mô and Loob discharged their arrows. Another ape fell from his perch, but caught himself on a lower branch and hung there writhing; while a third, with a shaft half buried in his paunch, fled back yelling into the tree-top. Then the adventurers snatched up their fallen weapons from the ground and made for the open as fast as they could run. And the apes, with hellish uproar of barks and screams, came swarming after them through the lower branches.

At this point, fortunately for the travellers, the jungle was already thinning and they had a chance to show their speed. The raging blue-faces were speedily distanced, and the fugitives ran out, breathless, upon the sunny savannah. Here, feeling themselves safe, they halted to look back. The lower branches, all along the edge of the grass, were thronged with leaping brown forms, and gnashing blue masks, and red-rimmed, devilish eyes. But not one of the great beasts, for all their rage, seemed willing to venture forth into the open.

"There must be something out here that they fear greatly," commented Grôm, peering about him warily. But there was nothing in sight to suggest any danger, and he led the way onward through the rank grass at a long, leisurely trot.

II

For the most part, the grass grew hardly waist high; but here and there were patches, perhaps an acre or so in extent, where it was more cane than grass and rose to a height of twelve or fifteen feet. To such patches, which might well serve as lurking-places to unknown monsters, Grôm gave a wide berth.

But in spite of the strange and enormous trails which crossed their path at times, in spite of occasional massive swayings and crashings in the deep beds of cane, the adventurous party accomplished the journey across the savannah without encountering a single foe. The mid-day blaze of the sun upon the windless grass, which was almost more than they could endure, was probably keeping the monsters to their lairs; and the only living things to be seen, besides the insects and a high-wheeling vulture or two, were a few shy troops of a kind of small antelope, incredibly swift of foot.

Grôm drew a breath of relief as they reached the foot of the hills. But just here it was impossible to climb them. A range of high limestone downs, they

The whole swarm of giant crabs, forgetting their intended victims, fell to fighting hideously among the bodies of the wounded (page 718).

were fringed by an unbroken line of cliff, perpendicular and at times over-hanging, from forty or fifty to perhaps a couple of hundred feet in height, and so smooth that even these goat-footed cave-folk could not scale them. The rich plain-land at their feet had once been a shallow inland sea, and now its grasses washed along their base in a gold-green, scented foam.

Turning to the right, Grôm led the way close along the cliff-foot to the water, which glowed like brass a hundred yards or so ahead. This water, as it chanced, was the brackish estuary of a river which, sweeping down from the east, here made its way to the sea through a long, slanting break in the limestone hills. It was now near low tide; and there opened before them, to the left, a strip of damp beach running around the base of the bluff.

They followed it confidently, though it was not more than twenty feet wide; and as they rounded the next bend a clamour of delight arose from all the party. Straight ahead, and not fifty paces distant, opened before them a spacious cave-mouth, with a somewhat wider strip of beach before it. Immediately beyond the cave the strip of beach came sharply to an end, and the tide lapped softly against the foot of the cliff.

And then, in the moment of their elation, a terrifying thing happened. As if aroused by their voices, the still surface a few yards from shore boiled up, and was lashed to foam by the strokes of a gigantic tail.

"Run!" yelled Grôm, and they all dashed forward, there being no chance to go back. In the same instant, an appalling head—like that of a thrice magnified and distorted crocodile, with vast, round, painted eyes—was upthrust from the water and came rushing after them at a pace which sent up a curving wave before it.

Quick as thought, Grôm drew his bow and shot at the appalling head. The arrow drove straight into the gaping throat, eliciting a thunderous bellow of rage, but producing no other effect. Then Grôm sprang after his fleeing companions, and raced for his life toward the cave mouth. The cave might be nothing more than a death-trap for them all; but it seemed to offer the one possibility of escape.

As they dashed into the cave mouth, the awful, gaping head was close behind them. They had a flashed glimpse, through the gloom, of high-arched distance melting into blackness, of a strip of black water along the right, and to left a gentle ascent of smooth white sand, whose end was out of sight.

Up this slope they raced, with the clashing of monstrous fangs close behind them. But they had not gone a dozen strides when the slope quivered, and heaved upwards shudderingly beneath them; and they all fell forward flat upon their faces. From all but Grôm there went up a shriek so piercing that in their own ears it disguised the stupendous rending roar which at that moment seemed to stun the air. The mighty arch of the cave mouth had slipped and crashed down, completely jamming the entrance, and opening up a gash of blue heaven above their heads.

To Grôm's unshaken wits, it was clear on the instant what had happened. He staggered to his feet and looked back through a rain of falling rock-splinters. He had a vision of their colossal pursuer, its jaws stretched to their utmost width, the vast globes of its eyes protruding from their armoured sockets, its ponderous, bowed fore-legs pawing the air aimlessly in the final convulsion. The falling rock-mass had caught it on the middle of the back, crushing its mighty frame like an egg-shell.

For a second or two, Grôm stood there rigid, staring, his gnarled fingers clenched upon his weapons. Then a second earthquake tremor beneath his feet warned him. With an unerring instinct, he sprang on up the slope after his companions, who had fled as soon as they could pick themselves up. And in the next moment the rock above his head, fissured deep by the rains, slipped again. With a growling screech, as if torn from the bowels of the mountain, it settled slowly down, and sealed the mouth of the cave to utter blackness.

Grôm stopped short, having no mind to dash out his brains against the rock. There was stillness at last, and silence save for a faint, humming moan which

seemed to come from vast depths beneath his feet. Profoundly awed, but master of his spirit, he stood leaning upon his spear in the thick dark till the last of that strange humming note had died away. Then, through a silence so thick it seemed to choke him, he called aloud:

"A-ya! where are you?"

"*Grôm!*" came the girl's answer, a sobbing cry of relief and joy, from almost, as it seemed, beneath his outstretched hand.

"We are all here," came the voices of the three men. They had fallen headlong at the second shock, as at the first; and in the darkness they had not dared to rise again, but lay waiting for their leader to tell them what to do. In half-a-dozen cautious, groping steps he was among them, and sank down by A-ya's side, clutching her to him to stop her trembling.

"What are we to do now?" asked the girl, after a long silence.

"We must find a way out," answered Grôm, with resolute confidence.

"If Hobbo had not dropped the fire!" said young Mô, bitterly.

The Giant groaned in self-abasement, and beat his chest with his great fists.

It was plain to Grôm from what he had seen in that last instant of daylight, that the entrance was now blocked impregnably. There was nothing to be done but grope onward through the cave in the hope of finding another exit.

"Come on!" he ordered at last, lifting A-ya and holding her hand in his grasp. Reaching out with his spear, he kept tapping the ground before him as he went, and occasionally the wall upon his left. Sometimes, too, he would reach upwards to assure himself that there was no lowering of the rocky ceiling. A spear's length to the right, more or less, he got always a splash of water.

A little further on, the cave wall turned to the left. A few steps more, and their path came to an end. There was water ahead of them, and on both sides. Grôm's exploring spear assured them that it was deep water.

"We must swim," said Grôm. "Leave your clubs behind." And leading the way down into the unknown tide, he struck out straight ahead.

It was nerve-testing work swimming thus through that unseen water to an unguessed goal; but Grôm was unhesitating, and his companions rested upon his steady will. The water was of a summer warmth, and slightly salt, which convinced him that it had free communication with the sunlit tides outside.

Suddenly there appeared ahead of them a faint, bluish gleam upon the water's surface. It was something elusive and unreal, and vaguely menacing.

"Daylight," exclaimed young Mô, eagerly. But Grôm said nothing. He did not think it was daylight, and he was apprehensive of some new peril.

The strange light grew and spread. It was evident now that it arose from the water, and also that it was advancing rapidly to meet the astonished swimmers. In a few moments, it was bright enough in its blue pallor to show the swimmers that they were traversing a vast hall of waters, whose roof was lost in darkness. Some fifty yards ahead of them, and a little to the right, a low spit of rock, half awash for the greater part of its length, ran out slantingly from the wall of the stupendous chamber.

Toward this ledge Grôm now led the way, hurling himself through the water on his side at top speed. He could not fathom this mysterious phosphorescence and he wished to get his people out upon dry land before it reached them. But fast as the adventurers swam, the ghostly radiance spread faster. Before they got to the ledge, the light was all about them; but it seemed to be coming from a great depth.

Nervously they all glanced down; and a low cry of horror broke from their lips. The depths, several fathoms down, were swarming with monstrous, luminous forms, a moon-bright, crawling, sliding field of claws and feelers, and broad, flat backs and dreadful protruding eyes.

The eyes all stared straight up at them, with a fixed malignancy that froze even Grôm's blood. They seemed innumerable, and all together they came suddenly floating upwards.

Already the fugitives were dragging

themselves out upon the ledge, in frantic haste, when the diabolical swarm reached the surface. But Hobbo, who was the slowest swimmer, was merely clutching at the rock when the water boiled all about him into a froth of light. A pair of huge, pincer-like claws seized him by the neck, another pair by one arm, plucking him back. His convulsed face stared upward for an instant and then, with a choked scream, he was dragged under. He disappeared for ever in a swirl of pale blue, frantically waving claws, and eyes, and feelers, and black-fringed, chopping mouths.

Beside himself with rage and horror, Grôm stabbed down wildly into the whirling struggle; and his example was followed at once by Loob and Young Mô. Some of their random blows went home, and as one or another of the gigantic crabs turned over in its death-throes, its nearest fellows seized it, tore it to pieces, and devoured it.

But A-ya, who had taken no part in this vengeance, now snatched Grôm by the arm, shrieking wildly:

"Look! They are coming out!"

Recovering their senses, the three half-maddened men looked about them. On every side the gigantic crabs—some with claws eight or ten feet long, and eyes upon the ends of long, waving stalks—were crawling up upon the ledge.

The ledge, fortunately, was of some width. At its landward end it rose into a mass of tumbled rocks perhaps twenty or thirty feet above the water. Toward this post of vantage the adventurers fought their way, striking and thrusting desperately with their spears as the monsters, crowding up from the water on either side, snatched at them with their terrible mailed claws. Over and over again one or another of the party was seized by the foot or the leg, but his companions would beat the long, jointed leg to fragments, or drive their spear-points deep into the awful, drooling mouth, and set him free.

At last, bleeding from many wounds, they reached the end of the ledge and clambered to the top. Here but three or four of the giant crustaceans tried to follow them, being indifferent climbers. These were easily speared from above, and hurled back disabled among their ravening kin. And the whole swarm, apparently forgetting their intended victims as soon as they were out of reach, fell to fighting hideously among themselves over the convulsed bodies of these wounded. The lower portion of the ledge, and the water all about it, was a crawling mass of horror that seemed to froth with blue light. And a confused noise of crackling, snapping and hissing arose from it.

Every eye but Grôm's was glued in fascination to the baleful scene. But Grôm now thought only of using that pervasive light to the best advantage while it should last. The wall of the cavern at this point was so broken and fissured that it was not unscalable; and a little way off to the right he marked, at some height above the water, what looked like the entrance to a lateral gallery.

"Come," he cried, "while the light lasts," and set off over the rocks. The others followed close. Now sidling along knife-like ledges, now clinging by fingers and toes to almost imperceptible projections, they made their way across the face of the steep, and gained the mouth of the gallery. It was spacious, and easy to traverse, its floor sloping upwards somewhat steeply. They plunged into it with confidence. And the blue light of the Hall of Terrors faded out behind them.

Not many minutes later, another light, as it were a white star gleamed ahead of them. It grew as they went, and turned to gold. Then a patch of turquoise sky, flecked sweetly with small fleeces of cloud, opened before them, and in a moment more they came out upon a high, blossoming down, blown over by a breeze that smelt of honey and salt. Below them was a lovely, land-locked bay, with a herd of deer pasturing among scattered trees by the shore. Away behind them undulated the gracious line of the downs, inviting their feet.

"It is a pleasant land," said Grôm, "and we will surely come back to it. But I think we will seek another way than that by which we came."

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

THE FEASTING OF THE CAVE FOLK

By Charles G·D·Roberts
Illustrated by
Frank Verbeck

AT last, and reluctantly, the Folk of the Caves had withdrawn from their earthquake-harassed valley and betaken themselves to the new dwelling-place which Grôm had found for them, on the green hill-slope beside the Bitter Waters.

They had lost no time, however, in accepting the new conditions, for these caves in the limestone were ample and secure—it was hard for any invader to come at them save by way of the long, bare ridge of the downs running westward behind the caves—a sweet-water brook rippled almost past their threshold to fall with a pleasant clamour into the bay—and the surrounding country was rich in game. The vast basin of marshy plain and colossal jungle, to be sure, which stretched and steamed below the downs to southward, was the habitation of strange monsters; but these, apparently, had small taste for exploring the high, clean, windy downs.

On a certain golden morning it chanced that the caves were well-nigh deserted. The men of the tribe, including the chiefs themselves, Bawr and Grôm, together with most of the women and the half-grown children, had gone off down the shore to a shallow inlet five or six miles distant to gather shell-fish—great luscious mussels and peculiarly plump and savoury whelks. The girl A-ya, absorbed in her special occupation of fashioning bows and arrows for the tribe, had remained behind, with a score or more of old men and women and Grôm's giant slave, the lame Tree Man, Ook-ootsk, to guard the little children and the tribal fires. As Grôm's mate, and his confidential associate in all his greatest ventures, A-ya's prestige in the tribe had come to be only less than that of Bawr and Grôm themselves.

On the open, grassy level before the cave-mouth the two great fires burnt steadily in the sun. The giant Ook-ootsk, hideous with his ape-like forehead, his upturned, flaring nostrils, his

All rights reserved Copyrighted in U S A by G G D Roberts 1914

protruding jaw, his shaggy, clay-coloured torso, and his short, massive, grotesquely bowed legs—of which one was twisted, so that the toes pointed almost backwards—lay sprawling and chuckling benevolently near the entrance, while a swarm of little ones, A-ya's two among them, clambered over him. The old men and the old women dozed in the shade, save two or three of the most diligent, who occupied their gnarled fingers in twisting thin strips of hide into bow-strings, or lashing slivers of stone into the heads of spears. A-ya sat cross-legged a little apart, beside a tiny fire, laboriously fashioning her bows and arrows by charring the wood in the embers and then rubbing it between two rough stones. With her head bent low over her work the heavy, tangled masses of her hair fell over it and got in the way, and from time to time she shook the troublesome locks aside impatiently. It was a picture of primæval peace.

But peace, in the days when earth was young, was something more precarious than a bubble.

From around the green shoulder of the hill came a sound of trampling hooves and laboured breathing. A-ya sprang to her feet, snatching up her own well-tried bow and fitting an arrow to the string. At the same time she gave a sharp alarm-cry, at which the lame slave, Ook-ootsk, arose, shaking off the swarm of children, and came hobbling towards her with his weapons in both hands. An old woman pounced upon the startled, wide-eyed children, and in a twinkling had them shepherded into the cave-mouth, out of sight. The old men, springing from their sleep and blinking, hurried forth into the sunlight, with such spears or clubs as they could lay instant hand upon.

A breathless moment, while all stood waiting for they knew not what,—then around the curve appeared a tall, wide-antlered elk, its eyes showing the whites with terror, its dilated nostrils spattering bloody froth. A long, raking wound ran scarlet down one flank. Staggering from weariness or loss of blood, it came on straight toward the cave-mouth, so blinded by its terror that it seemed not to see the human creatures awaiting it, nor even the fires before them.

A-ya fetched a deep breath of relief when she saw that this was no ravening monster. Her immediate thought was the hunter's thought. Here, indeed, was meat for the tribe. She drew her bow to the full length of her shaft; and as the panting beast went by she let drive. The arrow pierced to half its span, just behind the straining fore-shoulder. Blood burst from the animal's nostrils. It fell on its knees, struggled up again, blundered on for half-a-dozen strides, and dropped half-way across the second fire.

There was a chorus of triumphant shouts from the old men and women, and A-ya started forward with the intention of dragging her prize from the fire. But a look of apprehension and warning in the keen little eyes of Ook-ootsk, who had by this time hobbled to her side, checked her. In a flash the meaning of it came to her.

"What do you suppose was chasing it, Ook-ootsk?" she queried, and whipped about, without waiting for his answer, to stare anxiously at the green shoulder of the hillside.

"Black lion, maybe!" said Ook-ootsk in his harsh clucking voice, dropping his spear and club beside him and setting a long arrow to the string of his massive bow.

But the words were hardly out of his throat when his guess was proved wrong. Around the turn came lumbering, with huge heads hung low and half-open, slavering jaws, a pair of those colossal red bears of the caves which had always been A-ya's particular terror.

"Hide the children!" she yelled; and let fly an arrow, almost without aim, at the foremost of the monsters. She was the best shot in the tribe, and the shaft sped even too true. It struck the bear full in the snout, piercing through the palate and into the throat—a wound which, though likely to prove mortal after a time, only made the beast more dangerous for the moment. It paused, coughing, and tried to paw the torment from its jaws, and then rushed forward, screaming hideously.

In that pause, however, though it was

A-ya drew her bow to the full length of her shaft. The arrow pierced to half it span, just behind the straining fore-shoulder (*see page 904*).

but for a moment or two, the second bear had forged ahead of its companion. It was greeted instantly by an arrow from the massive bow of Ook-ootsk, aimed with cool deliberation. The long shaft of hickory, delivered thus at close range, caught the enemy in the front of the right shoulder and drove clean into the joint, so that the leg gave way and the frantic brute almost fell upon its side. With a roar it bit off the protruding half of the tough hickory, and then again came on, on three legs From A-ya's nimble bow it got another arrow, which went half-way through its neck; but to this deadly wound, which sent the blood gushing from its mouth, it seemed to pay no heed whatever. A-ya's next shot missed; and then, screaming for the old men to come into the fray, she snatched up her stone-headed spear and ran around behind the nearest fire, expecting the bears to follow her and be led away from the hiding-place of the children.

But she had forgotten that the slave Ook-ootsk, with his twisted and shrunken leg, could not run. That valiant savage, blinking his little eyes rapidly and blowing defiantly through his upturned nostrils as he saw his doom rushing upon him, let drive one more of his long shafts into the red, towering bulk, then dropped his bow, sank upon one knee, and held up his spear slantingly before him, with its butt firmly braced upon the ground. As the monster reared itself and fell upon him, the jagged point of the spear was forced deep into its belly, straight up till it reached the backbone. Then the shaft snapped. Ook-ootsk sprawled forward upon his face, and the monster, in the paroxysm of its amazement and agony, plunged right over him, involuntarily hurling him aside and clawing most of the flesh off his back with a kick of one gigantic hind paw. He clenched his teeth stoically, shut his eyes, folded his long hairy arms about his head and rolled himself into a ball, confidently expecting in the next moment to feel the life crunched out of him.

But just as the monster, recovering itself, was turning madly to finish off its insignificant but torturing opponent, A-ya came leaping back to the rescue, with a blazing and sparking faggot in each hand, and the old men, some with firebrands, some with spears, clamouring resolutely behind her. With fearless dexterity she thrust the fire straight into the monster's eyeballs, totally blinding him. As he wheeled to strike her down she slipped aside with a mocking laugh, and threw one of the brands between his jaws, where he crunched upon it savagely before he felt what it was and spat it out.

Depending now upon his ears, the monster blundered straight forward in the direction of the shouting voices, He had quite forgotten Ook-ootsk. He raged to come at this last intolerable foe, who had scorched the light from his eyes He made for her voice straight enough, but it chanced that exactly in his path lay the second fire—that into which the body of the elk had fallen. Already too maddened with the anguish of his wounds to notice the fire at once, he stumbled upon the body. Here, surely, was one of his foes. He fell to rending the carcase with his claws, and biting it, crawling forward upon it to reach its throat, with the fire licking up derisively about his head; till at length the flames were drawn deep into his labouring lungs, searing them and sealing them so that they could no more perform their office. With a shallow, screeching gasp he threw himself backwards out of the fire, rolled upon the turf, and lay there fighting the air with his paws as he strangled swiftly and convulsively.

The second bear, meanwhile, wallowing with marvellous nimbleness on three legs, had charged roaring into the group of old men. In a twinkling he had three or four spears sticking into him; but the arms that hurled the spears were weak, and the monster ramped on unheeding. Several firebrands fell upon him, scorching his long red fur, but he shook them off, too maddened to remember his natural dread of the flames. The group scattered in all directions. But one brave old grey-beard, who had marked A-ya s success, lingered in the path, and tried to thrust his blazing faggot into the monster's eyes, as she

had done He was not quick enough The monster threw up its muzzle, dodging the stroke, and the next moment it had struck down its feeble adversary and crushed bis head between its tremendous jaws.

In its anguish it now forgot its other enemies, and fell to wreaking its madness on the lifeless victim. But in another second or two it was fairly overwhelmed with the red brands descending upon its head. A-ya, with all the force of her strong young arms, drove her short spear half-way through its loins. Then, with one eye blinded and its long fur smouldering, its rage melted suddenly into panic. Lifting its giant head high into the air, as if thus to escape its fiery assailants, it turned and scuttled back the way it had come, while the old men swarmed after it, belabouring and jabbing its elephantine rump with their live brands

A-ya, racing like a deer and screaming with exultation, ran round the pack of old men and stabbed the frantic brute in the neck, with her spear held short in both hands. Shrinking abjectly from this attack, he swerved off toward the left. It was his left eye that was blinded; and the other was full of smoke and ashes He missed the path, therefore; and plunged squalling over the edge of the bluff, which at this point dropped about a hundred feet, almost perpendicularly, to the beach Rolling over and over, and bouncing out into space every time he struck the cliff face, he fell to the bottom amid a shower of stones and dust, and lay there as shapeless as a fur rug dropped from an upper window.

The old men, jabbering in triumph, craned their shaggy grey heads out over the brink to grin down upon him; while A-ya, with a wild light in her eyes and her strong white teeth gleaming savagely, turned back to tend the wounds of her slave Ook-ootsk.

II

Having assured herself that the hurts of Ook-ootsk, dreadful though they were, were yet not mortal (our sires of Cave and Tree took a lot of killing!), A-ya stepped over to the further fire to see about rescuing the carcase of the slain elk before it should be quite burned up As a matter of fact, there was little of it actually consumed by the fire, but it was amazingly shredded by the clawing of the blinded bear; and an odour of roasted venison streamed up from it which seemed rather pleasant to A-ya's nostrils. Under her direction the old men hauled the body from the fire by the hind-legs, and dragged it over to the edge of the bluff before cutting it up, for convenience in getting rid of the offal. Every one followed, to secure their due share of the tit-bits, except Ook-ootsk and one old woman This old woman sat rocking and keening beside the body of her mate whom the bear had slain; while Ook-ootsk crawled off into a neighbouring hollow to look for certain healing herbs which should cleanse and astringe his wounds

The hide of the elk was too much hurnt, too ripped and torn by the claws of the bear, to be of any use except for thongs; hut the old men skinned it off expertly before dividing the flesh. Though their gnarled fingers were feeble, they were amazingly clever in the use of the sharp-edged flakes of stone which served them as knives A-ya stood by them, watching closely, to see that none of the specially dainty cuts were appropriated. These delicacies were reserved for herself and her two children, and for Grôm when he should return. She had the right to them, not only because she was the mate of Grôm, but because the kill was hers.

As she stood over the carcase—the fore-part of which had been superficially barbecued in the fire—the smell of the roasted flesh began to appeal to her even more strongly than at first. As she sniffed it, curiously, it began to entice her appetite as nothing had ever tempted it before. She touched a well-browned, fatty morsel, and then put her fingers into her mouth. The flavour seemed to her as delightful as the smell. She cast about for a suitable piece on which to experiment.

Now it chanced tbat the elk's tongue, having lain in the heart of the fire well enclosed within the half-open jaws, had

been cooked to a turn. A-ya possessed herself of this ever-coveted delicacy. It looked so queer, in its cooked state, charred black along the lower edge, that she hesitated to taste it. At last, persuaded by its fragrance, she brought herself to nibble at it.

A moment more and she was devouring it with a gusto which, had manners been greatly considered in the days when earth was young, might have seemed unbecoming in the wife of a great chief. Never before had she eaten anything that seemed to her half so delicious. It was the food she had all her life been craving. Her two little boys, pulling at the leopard-skin about her loins, aroused her from her ecstasy. She gave them each a fragment, which they swallowed greedily, demanding more; and between the three of them the great lump of roast tongue quickly vanished.

The rest of the crowd, meanwhile, had been looking on with instinctive disapproval. The portions of the meat which the fire had cooked, or partly cooked, seemed to them spoiled. A-ya might, indeed, like the strange food, but she was different from the rest of them in so many ways! When, however, they saw her two boys follow her example, and noted their enthusiasm, several of the old men ventured to try for themselves. They were instant converts. Last of all the old women and the children—always the most conservative in such matters—took the notion that they were losing something, and ventured to essay the novel diet. One taste, as a rule, proved enough to vanquish their prejudices. In a very few minutes every shred of the carcase that could claim acquaintance with the fire had been eaten, and all were clamouring for more. Fully four-fifths of the carcase remained indeed; but it was all raw flesh. A-ya looked down upon it with disdain.

"Take it back, and throw it on the fire again!" she ordered angrily. The generous lump of steak which she had hacked off for herself from the loin had proved to be merely scorched on the outside, and she was disappointed. She stood fingering the raw mass with resentful aversion, while the old men and women, chattering gleefully and followed by the horde of children, dragged the mangled carcase back to the fire, lifted it laboriously by all four legs, swung it backwards and forwards, and managed to deposit it in the very midst of the flames. A shrill shout of triumph went up from the withered old throats at this achievement; and they all drew back to wait for the fire to do its wonderful work.

But A-ya was impatient and vaguely dissatisfied as she watched that crude roasting in the process. She stood brooding, eyeing the fire and turning her lump of raw flesh over and over in her hands. The attitude of body was one she had caught from Grôm, when he was groping for a solution to some problem. And now it seemed as if she had caught his attitude of mind as well. Into her brain, for the moment passive and receptive, flashed an idea, she knew not whence. It was as if it had been whispered to her. She picked up a spear, jabbed its stone head firmly into the lump of meat, and thrust the meat into the edge of the fire, as far as it could go without burning the wood of the spear-shaft.

It took her a very few minutes to realise that her idea was nothing less than an inspiration. Moving the morsel backwards and forwards to keep it from charring, she found that it seemed to do best over a mass of hot coals rather than in a flame; and being a thin cut it cooked quickly. When it was done she burnt her fingers with it, and her big red mouth as well; and her two boys, for whom she had torn off shreds too hot for herself to hold, danced up and down and wept loudly with the smart of it—to be promptly consoled, however, by the savour.

Noting the supreme success of A-ya's experiment, the spectators rushed in, dragged the carcase once more from the fire, and fell to hacking off suitable morsels, each for himself. In a few minutes everyone who could get hold of a long arrow, or a spear, or a pointed stick, was busy learning to cook. Even the wailing old mourner, finding the excitement irresistible, forsook the body

of her slain mate and came forward to take her share. Only the dead man, lying outstretched in the sun by the cave-door, and the crippled giant Ookootsk, away in the green hollow nursing his honourable wounds, had no part in the rejoicing, in this Revel of the First Cooked Food.

The hot meat juices, modified by the action of the fire, were almost as stimulating as alcohol in the veins of these simple livers, and the revel grew to something like an orgy as the shrivelled nerves of the elders began to thrill with new life. A-ya, seeing the carcase of the elk melt away like new snow under a spring sun, gave orders to skin and cut up the body of the first bear. But the old men were too absorbed in their feasting to pay any attention to her command; and she herself was too exhilarated and content to make any serious effort to enforce it. Everyone, old and young alike, was sucking burnt fingers and radiating greasy, happy smiles; and she felt dimly that anything like discipline would be unpopular at such a moment.

During all this excitement the main body of the tribe came straggling back along the beach from their hunting of whelks and mussels. At the foot of the bluff below the cave they found the body of the second bear, and gathered anxiously about it, clamouring over its spear-wounds and the arrows sticking in it, till Bawr and Grôm, who were in the rear, came up. It was plain there had been a terrific battle at the cave. With most of the warriors the two chiefs dashed on and up the path, to find out how things had gone; while a handful remained behind to skin the bear and cut up the meat.

When the anxious warriors arrived before the cave, they were amazed at the hilarity which they found there—and inclined, at first, to resent it, being something to which they had no clue. What were all the old fools doing, dancing and cackling about the fire, and wasting good meat by poking it into the fire on the ends of sticks and spears and arrows? The younger women, coming up behind the warriors, were derisive. They were always critical in their attitude toward A-ya—so far as they dared to be—and now they ran forward to scold and slap their respective children for putting this disgusting burnt meat into their mouths.

To Grôm and Bawr, however, A-ya explained the whole situation in a few pertinent phrases, and followed up her explanation by proffering them each a well-cooked morsel. They both smelled it doubtfully, tasted it, broke into smiles, and devoured it, smacking their bearded lips.

"Did *you* do this, girl?" demanded Grôm, beaming upon her proudly and holding out his great hairy hand for another sample. But Bawr strode forward, thrust the old men aside, hacked himself off a generous collop, stuck it on his spear-head, and thrust it into the flames.

In his impatience Bawr kept pulling the roast out every minute or two, to taste it and see if it was done enough. His enthusiasm—and that of Grôm, who was now following his example—cured the rest of the warriors of their hesitation so effectually that in five minutes there was nothing more left of the great elk's carcase but antlers, bone and offal. Those who had got nothing fell upon the body of the bear, skinning it and hacking at it in greedy haste. The young women, having satisfied convention by slapping their bewildered and protesting brats, soon yielded to curiosity, and began surreptitiously to nibble at the greasy cooked morsels which they had confiscated. Then they, too, grabbed up spears and sticks for toasting-forks, and came clamouring shrilly for their portions. And A-ya, standing a little apart with Grôm, smiled with comprehending sarcasm at their conversion.

For the next few hours the fires were surrounded each by a seething and squabbling mob, the innermost rings engaged in toasting their collops with one hand while with the other they tried to shield their faces from the heat. As fast as those in the front rank wriggled out with their browned and juicy titbits, others battled in to take their places; and the Tribe of the Cave Men, mindful of nothing but the gratification of this new taste, feasted away the

afternoon with such unanimous and improvident rejoicing as they had never known before.

At last, radiant with gravy and repletion, they flung themselves down where they would and went to sleep. Bawr and Grôm and two or three others of the older warriors, who had been wise enough to banquet without gorging themselves, thought with some misgiving of what might happen if an enemy should steal upon them at such an hour of torpor. But no enemy approached. With the fall of the dew the moon arose over the bay, honey-coloured in a violet sky, and played fantastic tricks with the shifting light of the fires. And from within the Cave came the voice of A-ya softly soothing a restless child.

The Village Umpire

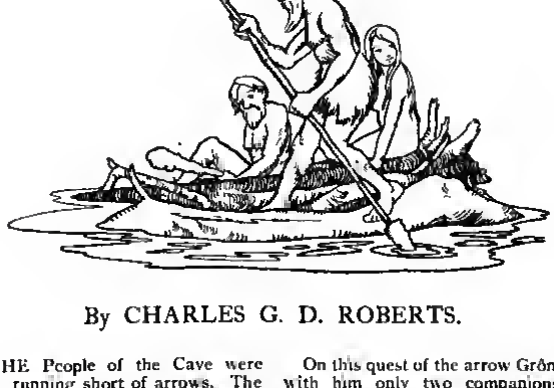
AT Slushton-Puddle-on-the-Hatch
I went to see a cricket match;
And as I strolled the hayfield round,
That served the village as a ground,
From his post some yards away,
I heard the village umpire say—
"Over, moreover,
Moreover, over."

It seemed to me 'twas very strange
That they should so their pitch arrange,
That black trees and a red-brick farm
Should come behind the bowler's arm;
And, as I neared the other side,
I heard the umpire call out—"Wide!
Over, moreover,
Moreover, over."

And soon, as I was passing by,
I saw the bowler take a shy;
The batsman made a bad miss-hit,
So that the long stop got to it.
I heard the village umpire shout—
"No-ball! Well caught! How's that? Why, out!
Over, moreover,
Moreover, over."

ON THE FACE of THE WATERS

A STORY OF WHEN EARTH WAS YOUNG



By CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

THE People of the Cave were running short of arrows. The supply of young hickory sprouts, on which they had depended for their shafts, was almost exhausted. And within a two days' journey of the Caves there was nothing to be found that would quite take the place of those hickory sprouts. Neither Grôm himself nor any other member of his tribe had as yet succeeded in so fixing a tip of bone or flint to a shaft of cane as not to interfere with its penetration. Some growth must be found that was tough, perfectly straight, and tapering, while at the same time so solid and hard of grain that it would take and hold a point, and heavy enough for driving power. All this was difficult to find; and Grôm was convinced that it must be sought for far afield. His restless spirit was craving new knowledge, new adventure.

On this quest of the arrow Grôm took with him only two companions—his slim, swift-footed mate, A-ya, and that cunning littlescout, Loob, the Hairy One.

For the space of three days they journeyed due west from the Caves. Then the range of downland which they had been following swept off sharply to the south. Being bent upon exploring to the westward—though he was not very clear as to his reasons for this preference—Grôm led the way down from the hills into the rankly-wooded plain. For two days more they pushed on through incessant perils, the country swarming with black lions, sabre-tooth, and woolly rhinoceros. As they were not fighting but exploring, the price of safety was a vigilance so unremitting that it soon began to get on their nerves, and they were glad to take a whole day's rest in the spacious security of a banyan top.

All rights reserved. Copyrighted in U.S.A. 1914

On the second day after quitting their refuge in the banyan top they emerged from the jungle so suddenly that they nearly fell into a river whose whitish, turbid flood ran swirling heavily before their feet. It was a mighty stream, a good half-mile in width, and at this point the current was eating away the bank so hungrily that whole ranks of tree and bush had toppled over into the tide.

The great river barred their way, flowing as it did toward the north-east, and Grôm reluctantly turned the course of the expedition southward, following up the shore. Swift as was the current, these folk of the Caves might have crossed it by swimming, but Grôm knew that such waters were apt to swarm with giant crocodiles of varying type and unvarying ferocity, as well as with ferocious flesh-eating fish that swarmed in wolfish packs and were able to tear an aurochs or a mastodon in pieces with their razor-edged teeth. He gazed desirously at the opposite shore, however,—which looked to him much more beautiful and more interesting than that on which he stood,—and wondered if he should ever be able to devise some way of reaching it other than by swimming.

Along the river shore the travellers had endless variety to keep them interested, with a less exhausting imminence of peril than in the depths of the jungle. Sometimes great branches, draped and festooned with gorgeous-flowered lianas, thrust themselves far out over the water, affording easy refuge. Sometimes the river was bordered by a strip of grassy level, behind which ran the edge of the jungle in the form of a steep bank of violent green, with here and there a broad splotch of magenta or violet or orange bloom flung over it like a curtain. At times, again, it was necessary to plunge back into the humming and steaming gloom behind this resplendent screen, in order to make a detour around some swampy cove whose dense growth of sedge, fifteen to twenty feet in height, was traversed by wide trails which showed it to be the abode of unfamiliar monsters. The travellers were curious as to the makers of such colossal trails, but were not tempted to gratify this curiosity by invading their lairs.

In all this time, and through all difficulties and dangers, neither Grôm nor A-ya nor the unsleeping Loob had lost sight of the object of their journey. Every straight and slender sapling and seedling of hard grain they tested, but hitherto they had found nothing that came within measurable distance of their requirements.

In the customary order of their going Grôm went first, peering ahead, ever studying, pondering, observing, with his bow and his club slung from his shoulder, his heavy, flint-headed spear always in readiness for use at close quarters. Loob the scout, little and dark and hairy, with the eyes of a weasel and the heart of a bull buffalo, went darting and gliding soundlessly through the undergrowth a few paces to the left, guarding against the approach of any attack from the jungle-depths. While A-ya, whose quickness and precision with the bow, her darling weapon, were nothing less than a miracle to all the tribe, covered the rear, lest any prowling monster should be following on their trail.

It chanced that A-ya dropped back some paces further, without saying anything to Grôm. She had marked a slim shaft of a seedling which looked suitable for an arrow; and in case the discovery should prove a good one she wanted the credit of it to herself. She stooped to pull the seedling up by the roots, since it seemed too tough to break. It was obstinate. In the effort her side and shoulder leaned fully against the trunk of a small tree of which she had taken no notice. In a second it seemed to her as if the tree trunk were made of red-hot coals. The stinging fire of it ran like lightning all over her arms and body. With a piercing scream she sprang away from the tree, and began tearing and beating frantically at her body with both hands. She was covered with furious ants,—the great, red, stinging ants whose venom is like drops of liquid flame.

At the sound of her scream, Grôm was back at her side in two leaps, his hair and beard bristling stiffly, his eyes blazing with rage. But there was no

assailant in sight on whom to hurl himself. For a second or two he glared about him wildly, with Loob crouched beside him, snarling for vengeance. Then, perceiving the woman's plight, he flung himself upon her, trying to envelope her in one sweeping embrace that should crush all the virulent pests at once. In this he failed signally, and in an instant the liquid fire was running over his own body. The torture of it, however, was a small thing to him compared with the torture of seeing the ants sting the woman, and feeling himself impotent to effect her instant succour. He slapped and beat at her with his great hands; while she covered her face with her own hands to protect it from disfigurement.

Loob came up to help, but Grôm, his brain keen in every emergency, stopped him.

"Keep off!" he ordered. "Keep off! and keep watch!"

Then he seized A-ya by one arm, rushed her to the edge of the bank, and dragged her with him into the water.

At this point the water was not more than three feet deep. They crouched down in it, heads under, for nearly a minute; while Loob, spear in hand, stood over them, his wild little eyes scanning the water depths in front and the jungle depths behind for the approach of any foe.

When they could hold their breath no longer, they stood up. Their red assailants were floating off on the current; but the fiery poison remained, and they bathed each other's scarlet and scorching shoulders assiduously, forgetful for the moment of everything besides. At this moment a gigantic water python reared its head from the leafage close by, fixed its flat, lidless, glittering eyes upon them, and drew back to strike. But in the next second, Loob's ready spear was thrust clean through its throat, and his yell of warning tore the air. Grôm and A-ya whipped up on to the bank like a pair of otters; and the python, mortally stricken, shot out into the water over their heads, carrying Loob's spear with it, gripped tight in the constriction of its throat muscles.

As the lashing body struck the surface the water boiled about it, suddenly alive with crocodiles. Baulked of their human prey, they fell upon the python. One of the monsters shot straight up, half-way out of the water, with two convulsive coils of the python's tail wrapped crushingly about its jaws; but the python, with Loob's spear through its throat, could only struggle blindly. A moment more and it was bitten in two, and the crocodiles were fighting monstrously among themselves for the writhing fragments.

"You got us out of that just in time," said Grôm, grinning upon the little scout with approval.

A-ya wrung the water out of her heavy hair with both hands, and threw the masses back with an upward toss of her head.

"I hate ants," she said shuddering. "Let's get away from here."

II.

Some two hours after sunrise of the following day, they came to a place where a belt of woods, perhaps a hundred to two hundred yards in depth, ran bordering the river, while behind it a broad stretch of grassy plain thrust back the jungle. Along the edge of the plain, skirting the belt of woods, the grass was short and the travelling was easy, but off to the left the growth was ranker, and interspersed with thickets such as Grôm always regarded with suspicion. He had learned by experience that these dense thickets in the grassland were a favourite lurking-place of the unexpected,—and that the unexpected was almost always perilous.

Suddenly from the deeper grass a couple of hundred yards or so to the left rose heavily the menacing bulk of a red Siva moose bull, and stood staring at them with mingled wonder and malevolence in his cruelly vindictive eyes. In stature surpassing the biggest rhinoceros that Grôm had ever seen, he gave the impression of combining the terrific power of the rhinoceros with the agile speed and devilish cunning of the buffalo. His ponderous head, with its high-arched, eagle-hooked snout, was armed with two pairs of massive,

keen-tipped, broad-bladed horns, that seemed to be a deadly-efficient compromise between the horns of a buffalo and the palmated antlers of a moose. This alarming apparition snorted loudly, and at once from behind him lurched to their feet some two score more of his like, and all stood with their eyes fixed upon the little group of travellers by the edge of the wood.

Grôm had heard vague traditions of the implacable ferocity of these red monsters, but never before having come across them he answered their stare with keen interest. At the same time, edging in closer to the wood, he whispered:

"Don't run. But if they come we must go up the first tree. They are swift as the wind, these great beasts, and more terrible than the sabre-tooth."

"Can't go in *these* trees!" said Loob, whose piercing eyes had investigated them minutely at the first glimpse of the monster in the grass.

"Why not?" demanded Grôm, his eyes still fixed upon the monsters.

"Oh! The bees! The terrible bees!" whispered A-ya. "Where can we go?"

Grôm turned his head and scanned the belt of woodland, his ears now suddenly comprehending a deep, humming sound which he had hitherto referred solely to the winged foragers in the grass-tops. Scattered at intervals from the branches in the shadowy green gloom hung a number of immense, dark, semi-pear-shaped globes. They looked harmless enough, but Grôm knew that their inhabitants, the great jungle-bees, were more to be dreaded than sabre-tooth or crocodile. To disturb, or seem to threaten to disturb, one of their nests, meant sure and instant doom.

"No, we must trust to our running,—and they are very swift," said Grôm.

"But let us go softly now, and perhaps they will not charge upon us."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the giant red bull, with a grunt of wrath, lurched forward and charged down at them. And instantly the whole herd, with their ridiculous little tails stuck up stiffly in the air, charged after him. Swift as thought A-ya drew her bow. The arrow buried itself deep in the red giant's muzzle. With a bawl of fury he paused, to try and root the burning torment out of his nose. The whole herd paused behind him. It was only for a few seconds, and then he came on again, blowing blood and foam from his nostrils, but they were precious seconds, and the fugitives, running lightly, and stooping low for fear of offending the bees, had gained a start of a hundred yards or more.

The three were among the swiftest runners of the tribe; but Grôm soon saw that the utmost they could hope was to maintain their distance. And there was the imminent risk that the bees, disturbed by the noise of flight and pursuit, might take umbrage. To lessen this frightful risk, he swerved out till he was some thirty or forty paces distant from the belt of woods. And he noticed, too, that the pursuing herd seemed to have no great anxiety to approach the frontiers of the Bee People. They were following on a slant that gave the woods a wide berth.

About a mile further on the woods came to an end; and Grôm, though he feared the pace might be beginning to tell on A-ya, and though there was no refuge in sight, breathed more freely. He feared the bees more than the yellow monsters, because they were something he could not fight. The grass-land now ran clear to the river's edge, and gave firm footing; and the fugitives raced on, breathing carefully, and trusting to come to trees again before they should be spent.

At last a curve of the bank showed them the woods sweeping down again to the water,—but three or four miles ahead! Grôm, looking back over his shoulder, realized that their pursuers were now gaining upon them appreciably. With an effort he quickened his pace still further. Loob responded without difficulty. But A-ya's face showed signs of distress; and at this Grôm's heart sank. He began to scan the water, weighing the chances of the crocodiles. It looked as if they were trapped beyond escape.

Perhaps half-a-mile up the shore a spit of land ran out against the cur-

rent; and behind its shelter an eddy had collected a mass of uprooted trees and other flood refuse, matted with green from the growth of wind-borne seeds. It was in reality a great natural raft, built by the eddy and anchored behind the little point. For this Grôm headed with new hope. It might be strong enough,—parts of it at least,—to bear up the three fugitives. But their furious pursuers would surely not venture their giant bulks upon it.

Approaching the point, he slackened his pace, and steadied A-ya with one hand. At the edge of the eddy he stopped, casting an appraising eye over the collection of débris, in order to pick out a stable retreat and also the most secure path to it. In this pause the monsters swept up with a thunder of trampling hoofs and windy snortings. They had their victims at last where there was no escape.

The raging brutes were not more than a dozen paces behind, when Grôm led the way out upon the floating mass, picking his steps warily and leaping from trunk to trunk. Loob and A-ya followed with like care. Certain of the trunks gave and sank beneath their feet; but their feet were already away to surer footing. And at the very outermost point of that old collection of débris, where the current and the eddy wavered for mastery, on a toughly interwoven tangle of uprooted trunks and half-dead vines, they found a refuge which did not yield beneath them. Here, steadying themselves by upthrust branches, they turned and looked back, half apprehensive and half defiant, at their mighty pursuers.

"They'll never dare to try to follow us here," gasped A-ya.

But she was wrong. Quite blind with rage through that galling shaft in his muzzle, the giant bull came plunging on, and half-a-dozen of his closest followers, infected with his madness, came with him. The inner edge of the mass gave way at once beneath them,—and the bank at this point was straight up and down. The monsters floundered in deep water, snorting and spluttering, while their fellows on the shore checked themselves violently and drew back bawling with bewilderment. As the drowning monsters battled to get their front legs up upon the raft, the edges gave way continually beneath them, plunging them again and again beneath the surface, while A-ya stabbed at them vengefully with her spear, and Loob shot arrows into them till Grôm stopped him, saying that the arrows were too precious to waste. Thereupon Loob tripped delicately over the surging trunks and smote at the struggling monsters' heads with his light club.

The anchorage of this natural raft having been broken, the weight of the monsters striving to gain a foothold upon it soon thrust its firm outer portion forth into the grip of the current. In a minute or two more this solid portion was torn away from the rest, and went sailing off slowly down stream with its living freight. The incoherent remnant was left in the eddy, where the snorting monsters struggled and threshed about amongst it, now climbing half-way out upon some great trunk, which forthwith reared on end and slid them off, now vanishing for a moment beneath the beaten stew of leaves and vines.

A couple of the horned giants, being close to the bank, now seemed to recover their wits sufficiently to turn and clamber ashore. But the others were mad with terror. And in a moment more the fascinated watchers on the raft perceived the cause of this madness. All round the scene of the turmoil the water seethed with lashing tails and snapping jaws; and then one of the monsters, which had struggled out into clear water, was dragged down in a boiling vortex of jaws and bloody foam. A few moments more and the whole eddy became a bubbling hell of slaughter, and great broad washes of crimson streamed out upon the current. The monsters, for all their giant strength, and the pile-driven blows of their huge hoofs, were as helpless as rabbits against their swarming and ravenous assailants; and the battle,—which indeed was no battle at all,—soon was over. The eddy had become but a writhing nest of crocodiles.

"It was hardly worth while wasting arrows, you see," said Grôm, standing

erect on the raft and watching the scene with brooding interest

"Do you suppose those swimming beasts with the great jaws can get at us here?" demanded A-ya with a shudder.

"While this thing that carries us holds together, I think we can fight them off," replied Grôm. And straightway he set himself to examine how securely the trees were interknit. The trunks had been piled by flood one upon another, and the structure seemed substantial; but further to strengthen it he set all to work interweaving the free branches and such creepers as the mass contained, with the skill that came of much practice in the weaving of tree-top nests.

When all was done that could be done, the voyagers took time to look about them. They had by now been swept far out into the river, and the shores on either side seemed low and remote. A-ya felt oppressed, the face of the waters seeming to her so vast, inscrutable, and menacing. She stole close up to Grôm and edged herself under his massive arm for reassurance. The little scout sat like a monkey between two branches, and scratched his hairy arms, and, with an expression of pleased interest, scanned the water for the approach of new foes. As for Grôm, he was entranced. This, at last, was what he had really come in search of, the stuff for arrows being merely his excuse to himself. This was the utterly new experience, the new achievement. He was travelling by water, not in it, but upon it—upborne, dry and without discomfort, upon its surface.

For a little while he did not ask whither he was borne. To his surprise the crocodiles and other formidable water dwellers which were quite unknown to him, paid them no attention whatever; and he concluded that they looked upon the raft as nothing more than a mass of floating driftwood containing nothing for them to eat. He could see them everywhere about, swimming with brute snouts half above water or basking on sandy spits of shore. Then he observed that the current was bearing them gradually towards that further shore which he so longed to visit, and he thrilled with new anticipation. But when, after perhaps an hour, the capricious tide blew them again to mid-stream, a new idea took possession of him. He must find some way of influencing the direction of their voyage. He could not long relinquish himself to the blind whim and chance of the current.

Just as he was beginning to grapple with this problem, A-ya anticipated his thought,—as he had noticed that she often did. Looking up at him through her tossed hair, she enquired where they were going.

"I am just trying to think," he answered, "how to make this thing take us where we want to go."

"If the water is not too deep, couldn't you push with your long spear?" suggested the girl.

Acting at once on the suggestion, Grôm leaned over the edge and thrust the spear straight downwards. But he could find no bottom.

"It is too deep," said he, "but I'll find a way."

As he stood near the forward end of the raft he began sweeping the spear in a wide arc through the water, as if it were a paddle, but with the idea, merely, of testing the resistance of the water. Poor substitute as the spear was for a paddle or an oar, his great strength made up for its inefficiency, and after a few sweeps he was astonished and delighted to notice that the head of the raft had swung away from him so that it was heading for the shore from which they had come.

He pondered this in silence for a little, then stepped over to the other side and repeated the experiment. After several vigorous efforts the unwieldy craft yielded. Its head swung straight, and then, very gradually, turned towards the other side. Yes, there was no doubt about it. He had found a way of influencing their direction.

"I am going to take you over to the other shore," he announced proudly.

And now, labouring in a keen excitement, he set himself to carry out his boast. First he so overdid it that he made the raft turn clean about and head up-stream. He puzzled over this

for a time, but at length got it once more headed in the direction which he wished it to take. Then he found that he could keep it to this direction—more or less—by taking a few strokes on one side, then hurriedly crossing to take a few strokes on the other. And in this way they began once more to approach the other bank. The process, however, was slow, and Grôm presently concluded that it was wasteful. He hit upon the idea of setting A-ya and Loob together to stroking with their spears on one side, while he, with his great strength, balanced their effort on the other. Whereupon the sluggish craft woke up a little and began to make perceptible progress, on a slant across the current toward shore.

"I have found it!" he exclaimed in exultation. "On this thing we can travel over the water where we will."

"But not against the current," objected A-ya, whose enthusiasm was a little damped by the fact that she did not like the look of that further shore.

"That will come in time," declared Grôm confidently.

"Here's something coming now," announced Loob, springing to his feet and grabbing his bow. At the same moment the flat, villainous head of a big crocodile shot up over the edge of the raft, and its owner, with enormous jaws half open, started to scramble aboard.

A-ya's bow was bent as swiftly as Loob's, and the two arrows sped together, both into the monster's gaping gullet. It rolled back hastily into the water and sank, leaving a foamy wake of blood behind it.

By this time they were getting nearer the other shore. But on close view, Grôm was bound to admit that it was not alluring. It was so low as to be all awash, and fringed deep with towering reeds which were traversed by narrow lanes of water. Of dry land there was none to be seen.

"Oh, we don't want to go ashore there!" protested A-ya fervently. As she spoke a hideous head, with immense, round bulging eyes and long, beak-like mouth, arose over the sedge-tops on a long, swaying neck and stared at them fixedly.

"No, we don't," said Grôm, with decision, making haste to swing the head of the raft once more out into the channel.

Grôm made up his mind that the exploration of that unknown shore could await a more convenient season. He was now deeply absorbed in the complex problem of directing and managing his raft. As he pulled his spear through the water, and noted the additional effect of its flat head, the conception came to him of something that would get more propulsive grip upon the water than was possible to a round pole. Furthermore, he was quick to realise that the immense, shapeless mass of débris on which they were travelling, might be replaced by something light and manageable which he would make by lashing some trimmed trunks together with lengths of bamboo to give additional buoyancy. As he brooded thus in silence, with that deep inward look in his eyes which always kept A-ya from breaking in upon his vision, he came to the idea of a formal raft, and formal paddle. His eager desire now was to get back home, and put his new schemes into execution.

"Where are we going now?" asked A-ya.

Grôm looked about him widely—at the sky, at the far-off hills on their right, at the course of the stream, which had changed within the past few miles. His sense of direction was unerring.

"This river," he answered, "flows towards the rising sun, and must empty into the bitter waters not more than a day or a half-day from the Caves. We are going home. We will come again to look for arrows in a new raft which I will make."

As he spoke, Loob's spear darted down beside the raft, and came up with a big, silvery fish writhing upon it. He broke its neck with a blow and laid the prize at A-ya's feet.

"I wish we had fire with us, to cook it with," said she.

"On the new raft, as I will make it," said Grôm, "that may very well be. Our journey will be safe and easy, and a good fire we will have always with us."

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

COMING OF AGE

TWENTY-ONE YEARS OF THE PALL MALL MAGAZINE

By Albert Kinross

IN the pages of a novel you occasionally come across the ideal literary or artistic enterprise. It fulfils all the conditions that poets have dreamed or painters have visualised in the intimate glow of conversation. There is the patron eager to reward and fertilise with untold gold. There is the applause and even the collaboration of an old and cultured aristocracy. To these enter the artist, now bidden to do his finest. Disraeli and Lytton would have revelled in the portrayal of such an enterprise, to-day it seems an impossible conjunction. Yet only a brief twenty-one years ago it actually came to pass, and the initial impetus is still in being. I allude of course to the founding of our own PALL MALL MAGAZINE, whose majority is the occasion for this paper.

Your Editor has asked me to review the period through which our magazine has passed, to talk about it as I remember it through number after number,

"Out of the night
Black as Hell
I thank God for
For my Unconq

W. E. HENLEY.

The famous editor and author (the "National Observer" group) photographed five years before his death in 1903. Leader of a school of manly and robust writers, he was a brilliant contributor to our early numbers and created a profound literary sensation in 1888 with his essays on R. L. S. the man

and actually these twenty-one years coincide pretty well with my own existence as a writer, so that no task could be more welcome, or more agreeable.

The Birth of a Literary Magazine

In the year 1893 we had no high-class illustrated magazine if one except *The Idler*, which was edited by Messrs Jerome K. Jerome and Robert Barr and which for some unexplained reason after a memorable ascent had started on a still more memorable decline. It had "discovered" and gathered round it all the talent of that day, a really remarkable group, then in the first flush of success and creative power. Kipling, Conan Doyle, Robert Louis Stevenson, Anthony Hope and Israel Zangwill are among the names that I recall especially, yet for some reason *The Idler* lost its popularity and the way lay open for Mr William Waldorf Astor and THE PALL MALL MAGAZINE.

There was, as I have already indicated, a romantic quality about the new enterprise which makes of its coming a thing almost unique in the annals of British letters. Here we had an American gentleman of culture and vast fortune, who like Lorenzo the Magnificent or the Duke of Weimar was eager to encourage the noblest thing that is being sung in verse or written in plain prose. In default of a court he had to content himself with a plain magazine, it seems to be the modern equivalent. Associated with Mr Astor were Lord Frederic Hamilton and Sir Douglas Straight: these were our first Editors. The price of the magazine was a shilling, and the cover, then a startling and permanent feature, was designed by Linley Sambourne of *Punch* whose series of covers for *The Sketch* (at that time in its infancy) had come regarded as the last word in outside decoration.

A Time when Culture was Smart

The period we are discussing had its humours. The school of the decadents, presided over by Oscar Wilde, was in full working order and Mr John Lane had just launched his famous quarterly, *The Yellow Book*. Opposed to these, and equally emphatic, were the Tolstoyan theories of W. E. Henley, whose organ was the *National Observer*. So much for the general direction of things literary

OSCAR WILDE. *Elliott & Walery*

The prophet of the decadent authors who stood in opposition to the Henley school at the time when the Magazine was started. Art for art's sake was his creed, though "all art," he wrote, "is absolutely useless."

THE PALL MALL MAGAZINE stood aloof and chose if it willed from either camp. Prefacing the earliest volume and set down after the experience of half a year, you may read a statement of the editorial policy. "The magazine," it is written, "was started in the belief that there was a large and influential section of the reading public who would cordially welcome and heartily support a periodical that aimed at securing and maintaining a high and refined and artistic standard. That this belief was a well-founded one," they add, "has been abundantly proved." I doubt whether to-day there exists an Editor outside Carmelite House who would have courage to use the word "refined." The full statement in itself, however, offers no occasion for surprise, as the love of good art and the passion for good literature were singularly widespread in the nineties. Even Society was on affectionate terms with culture, and a taste for such matters was actually considered an element of "good form" among a large and influential body of our aristocracy. To-day these elements vie in illiteracy with the wealthiest members of our middle classes.

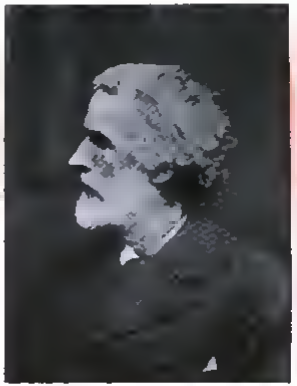
HARDY, SWINBURNE AND MEREDITH

The earliest numbers of the magazine are specially memorable, covering as they do a period when our lions, young and old, were in full practice. Here first appear Swinburne's poem, "Astrophel," and Rudyard Kipling's "Bobs", here is work by George Meredith and Thomas Hardy, and all through we encounter Mr. Zangwill at his best in those brilliant pages which he contributed under the general heading, "Without Prejudice." Every one of these authors retains his freshness; the half-dozen of Mr. Kipling's poems found here (including that masterpiece "For To Admire") are as vivid to-day as when they first delighted us, and I seem to catch a foreshadowing of the Boy Scout movement—certainly the most hopeful thing of this century—as I turn again to those virile pages wherein the world first made acquaintance with *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*. This novel of Meredith's last period ran gaily as a serial with illustrations by the late John Gulich, who, it amused me and amazed me to see, had omitted to provide a picture of the famous scene between "Matey" and Aminta in the water.

Perhaps these names mean little to the rising generation, and yet there was a largeness and a surprise about almost everything they did. Swinburne, I am afraid, did occasionally repeat himself, but a new Hardy or a new Meredith was an event that set us all agog. Like "Bobs" too, these men did not advertise; one read few paragraphs about them and they were seldom or never interviewed. Their acquaintance was a rare and much sought privilege, and Meredith, to take an instance within my own knowledge, was more royally royal than most kings. Like Irving and G. F. Watts the painter he ruled over "subjects" rather than admirers. The personality of the man had in it

R. L. STEVENSON.

The greatest of all romancists who died in 1894. His unfinished novel "St Ives" was published after his death in "The Pall Mall Magazine," and completed by Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch ("Q").



Thomson

GEORGE MEREDITH.

The last of the great "Victorian" novelists, and creator of so many wonderful and fascinating heroines, whose "Lord Ormont and his Aminta" ran as a serial in 1894.

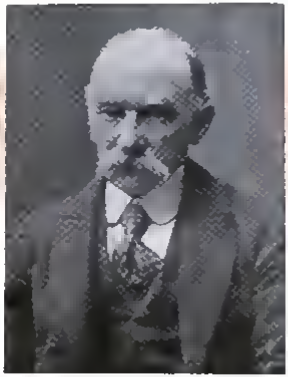
something at once demonic and overpowering, and I fear that even a superman would have looked small beside the intense energy and searching heat which radiated from his presence.

Early Work of Some Latter-Day Lions

Other names which figure in these opening volumes announce the arrival of men who were shortly to make their mark. There are spirited stories and verse by Conan Doyle, E. W. Hornung, who later on was to enliven the magazine with some passages from the biography of "Mr. Raffles," is well to the fore, and one meets a story by "E. F. Benson (author of *Dodo*)." And again it is amusing to see that Hall Caine once wrote like a plain human being, and there are drawings (among the earliest) signed by that eventful genius, Aubrey Beardsley, and poems by May Sinclair, since famous as a writer of remarkable fiction. In other directions one encounters "Geo. N. Curzon," whom I have reason to suspect as being identical with the distinguished Viceroy and politician—he contributes articles descriptive of his travels in the East. Then there is Lady Brooke, whom a later generation knows as the Countess of Warwick. One discovers that Lady Brooke, discoursing on Society, has a very different standpoint from the Socialist utterances of Lady Warwick.

A notable feature, and one that deserves more than a passing mention, was the series entitled "Famous Houses of Great Britain," contributed by the actual owners, or under their immediate direction. Similar papers, illustrated by similar photographs, have since formed one of the most successful features of *Country Life*.

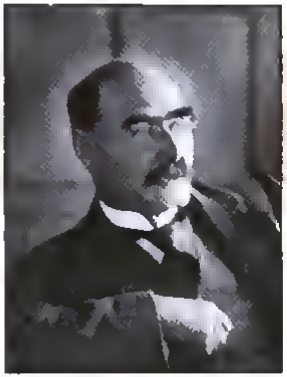
It was a day, too, when a magazine had space for original contributions of a biographical, an historical, or even of an æsthetic character. We find the late Sir Walter Besant telling the story of Westminster, and Grant Allen writes about "The Evolution of Italian Art." A versatile fellow this Grant Allen, dis-



Russell

THOMAS HARDY,

The master of tragic realism, and interpreter of Wessex, who contributed a story in 1894 and other work thereafter. This photograph was taken in 1902.



Russell

RUDYARD KIPLING, AS HE IS TO-DAY

"Bobs," "Back to the Army Again" "For to Admire," and several other well known "Kipling poems" appeared in early numbers.

tinguished in Science and speculative philosophy; at home, as we see, in the great picture galleries, and yet capable of winning the *Tit-Bits* prize of £1,000 for a popular story or startling us with a novel so "advanced" as *The Woman Who Did*. In another direction, that of military history, we light on Lord Wolseley's *Decline and Fall of Napoleon*, while, close on this comes Lord Roberts himself with a stimulating study of Wellington. Another side of the magazine, still with us in essence should occasion offer, is a department headed "Vexed Questions," and there you may read a discussion of the Home Rule question that raises every point which is raised to-day. "Should Members of Parliament be Paid?" is the title of a second and equally modern argument, and I find also that many of the social and economic questions now being debated by heated Fabians were already with us in those days, and being discussed with an equal seriousness and better manners.

Changes in "Make-Up" and Appearance

Comparing the present Pall Mall Magazine with the magazine of 1893 one of the most notable changes seems to reside in what Editors call the "make-up" and the illustrations. To-day the latter are not only infinitely better as works of art, but they are reproduced in a manner unheard of twenty years ago, when the wood engraving was gradually giving way to the new process block. It is equally certain, too, that the art of illustration is attracting and holding men who would have been ordinary painters in the early nineties. It is not, however, till 1898 or thereabouts that the illustrations of the magazine are specially remarkable. The great wood engravers had passed on to painting proper, were monopolised by *Punch*, or else had died, the new men who were to develop the resources of the process block had not yet found a footing.

And now as to the "make-up" of the magazine, at that time the easiest of

Russell

AUBREY BEARDSLEY.

Who illustrated the memorable "Yellow Book," which was started at about the same time as "The Pall Mall Magazine." Some specimens of his brilliant work are to be found in our earliest issues.

tasks, when a page was solid and the cross headline unknown. There was no breaking up into paragraphs, each furnished with a motto in capitals, no double column to relieve the eye, and the illustrations could all go on the same brand of paper. Such is not always the case to-day. If you look carefully at the present issue, for instance, you will discover that three different kinds of paper have been employed in printing it, each specially suited to the reproduction of certain kinds of illustration. It is a formidable task to make these physical demands conform with the literary ones.

Of these earliest years between 1894 and 1897 I have no inside knowledge, yet I had friends on board some happily still with us, who speak of the gay insouciance and extravagance of the enterprise, and especially of a banquet over which Mr. Astor himself presided and explained that a recent indisposition of his had been diagnosed by the doctors as poor man's gout!

Towards 1898 began my own connection with the magazine. Sir Douglas Straight had gone on to the *Gazette*, and Lord Frederic Hamilton had found a new assistant, who was subsequently to be his successor in the Editorship. I allude to Mr. G. R. Halkett. This gentleman, as readers of the *Pall Mall Gazette* are well aware, had a profound knowledge of art and to this was joined a keen sympathy with the younger generation of writers, among whom we now find such well-known names as H. G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, G. K. Chesterton, Perceval Gibbon, G. S. Street (the new Censor of Plays), and the ever-young W. E. Henley.

LINLEY SAMBOURNE.

The famous English cartoonist who designed our first cover (reproduced on page 505). Photographed in 1895.

I put Henley at the end, nowadays it is difficult to realise the influence this man possessed. He was, if I may say so without offence, the last of the romantic editors. An autocrat who failed splendidly with whatever he touched, Henley was always able to find a backer, and though his own writing was uneven and noticeably mannered, he was the cause of so much good writing in others that on that account alone he must win immortality. Since Dr. Johnson's day there had been no such figure in British letters. He published Kipling, who, I am told, preferred to write for *The National Observer* for next to nothing rather than realise the full market value of his "stuff" else-

where. He "discovered" H. G. Wells, G. W. Steevens, Stephen Crane, and a host of lesser men who asked no more than to serve under his banner. His hates were their hates and his affections theirs. Retiring now from the cares of editorship, his pen was at the service of the magazine, and it was he who startled literary Scotland by a memorable and none too flattering re-estimate of Robert Burns, and who exploded a second and more devastating bomb-shell when, breaking a long silence, he gave the world his view of "R.L.S.," the man. This paper, appearing in the PALL MALL MAGAZINE, caused a commotion comparable to that occasioned by Froude's exposition of Carlyle. I doubt whether to-day it would be possible to arouse so much public interest in the writing down of a literary personality, however gifted.

A PERIOD OF EXCITEMENT

It will be gathered from this instance that the magazine was now embarked upon a lively and exciting period. So much is certain, yet Mr. Halkett kept his head, and apart from these purely personal alarums and excursions, there was plenty of more stable entertainment. Anthony Hope's *Rupert of Hentzau* had run here as a serial: this was followed after an interval by H. G. Wells' *Kipps* and *The War of the Worlds*. Other story-tellers still read eagerly, or remembered by the public, are Madame Sarah Grand, Gilbert Parker, Robert Hichens, Bret Harte, E. Nesbit, H. A. Vachell, Algernon Blackwood, "Q.," George Gissing, Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, "the author of *Lady Audley's Secret*," Pett Ridge, Eden Phillpotts, and "E. A. Bennett," doubtless the Arnold Bennett of to-day. Mrs. Flora Annie Steel contributed her novel, *The Hosts of the Lord*, John Oliver Hobbes presented us with another serial, *The Vineyard*, and Maurice Hewlett gave us *The Queen's Quair*; and despite the influence and example of Mr. Henley, there were valuable recruits who had enlisted from The Bodley Head. Max Beerbohm, Katharine Tynan, Richard Le Gallienne, Arthur Symons are still with us, but John Davidson is gone, and none that ever knew him can forget him. So warm a heart, so generous a soul, and the divine simplicity of a child! He was so much greater than his work, though that was fine enough in its best moments. Nor must I forget Robert Louis Stevenson, whose unfinished story, *St. Ives*, completed by Quiller-Couch, ran as a serial. And here too were printed a brace of papers on things military by Mr. Winston Churchill, at that time deep in journalism and fresh from his history of *The River War*.

MAY SINCLAIR, *Russell*.
Authoress of "The Divine Fire" and other well-known novels, who has contributed stories and verses.

W. B. YEATS, *Russell*.
The Irish poet and dramatist. His first contribution appeared in 1895.

JOHN DAVIDSON.
Whose "Nature's" poems frequently appeared with decorative illustrations between 1895 and 1897.

WALTER DE LA MARE.
Who, under the name Robert Fitzr, who wrote prose for THE CHAP-BOOK in 1894, and contributed a poem to its pages in 1895.

Able Art-Editing

I think our illustrators of this period deserve some considerable mention Lewis Baumer, now so prominently before the public was conspicuous in the first number he furnished those odd thumb nail sketches which enlivened Mr Zangwill's causerie, and has served the magazine loyally Yet it was first under Mr Halkett that the illustrations became as noticeable as the text One does not wish to trouble the reader with a list of names, but at this time one might find drawings by Frank Brangwyn, D Y Cameron, Bertram MacKennal Patten Wilson Arthur Rackham Maurice Greiffenhagen, W Hyde Raven Hill, A S Hartrick, Miss Brickdale, Jessie Bayes, E J Sullivan (who illustrates Mr Chesterton's *Father Brown* stories), W. Hatherell and Byam Shaw And specially remarkable were the contributions of S H Sime, an artist who to my thinking will some day be regarded as one of the greatest England has produced These ladies and gentlemen were and are among the foremost illustrators in the land, and it was a bold and courageous policy which brought them under one roof

VISCOUNT CURZON OF KEDLESTON

Who, over the signature "Geo N Curzon," wrote articles for the magazine descriptive of travel in the East. This portrait dates from 1893

ROBERT HICHENS,

The famous novelist, whose work has been represented from time to time by short stories. His first article, 'Street Scenes in Cairo," occurs in 1894

The Causerie Ever a Tradition

The causerie, a tradition now ably maintained by Mr Belloc, was ever a strong feature of the magazine I have spoken of Mr. Zangwill's series "Without Prejudice," since issued as a book To Zangwill followed the present Sir A T. Quiller-Couch, who headed his monthly paper, "From a Cornish Window," and after these came Messrs Henley Street and Chesterton the last of whom as long ago as 1902 was emphatic on a topic so topical as "The Over-Production of Novels" Other conversations were carried on by Mr. Archer, who took part in a duologue shared with one or another of our prominent men; and during the "Hundred Best Books" controversy, I

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD.

Some of whose weird psychical fantasies have appeared in our pages

G S STREET

The well-known author of "Ghosts of Piccadilly," who once contributed "Literary Causerie."

find Mr. Clement Shorter hard at it with Lord Avebury, and certainly not lacking in either courage or conviction.

Among poets of the great age, I have mentioned Meredith and Swinburne, subjoined to such successors as Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, Paul Verlaine, Katherine Tynan, Henry Newbolt and John Davidson. W. B. Yeats is here, Walter de la Mare, and of special interest is a sheaf of verse by John Masefield—the first that was ever published. Early in the present century this poet contributed a characteristic example in "The Yarn of the 'Loch Achrey,'" and his virile muse enlivens numerous subsequent issues with matter very similar to that which has won him his present renown. Alfred Noyes occurs but once, doubtless pre-empted by *Blackwood's*, and it is curious to find the dual personality of William Sharp and Fiona Macleod enjoying a parallel existence. And before we leave the poets I had better name the Queen of Roumania and the late King of Sweden, the two royalties on our list, here handsomely presented and enjoying the collaboration of famous artists.

Landmarks of Personality

Apart from these leading features of a magazine, and I daresay quite unconcerned with art or literature, are pages which have an interest of their own in that they fix a landmark or the uprising of a prominent personality. Thus in 1904 I find Monsieur Santos Dumont dealing for the first time, in so far as the magazine is concerned, with aerial navigation; and the year 1906 is made memorable with an article, "What it Feels Like to be in Prison," written and illustrated by Miss Sylvia Pankhurst. In 1905 Commander Peary explains "The Lure of the North Pole," little recking that in a few brief years he himself was to reach it, while Amundsen and Scott would do as much for its opposite. On other pages I find Messrs. Besier and Maugham figuring as writers of fiction; to-day all England and America has learnt to regard them as successful dramatists. To multiply these instances is to become a bore; yet, A.D. 1905, I must not omit Mr. John Burns, with an exceedingly well-written paper on "London Old and New," and the present editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, with an equally informed interpretation of Mr. John Burns.

I am done with this survey and its personalia. If there are omissions, I hope that no sensitive contributor will put them down to malice or lack of appreciation. With so many names to choose from it has been difficult to avoid the appearance of a catalogue, and a catalogue is one thing and a magazine article another. Yet before advancing to the present or Georgian period of the magazine, inaugurated under the kindly editorship of Mr. Halkett's successor, Mr. Charles Morley, one contributor must be named who has seldom failed to make an appearance in each year of our twenty-one. Mr. Astor's imaginative and scholarly reconstructions of the ancient world, and his graceful handling of the occult, still hold their charm, and to many readers it must seem a pity that he has given to the enjoyment and administration of a great estate a talent which deserves a wider audience. When, in 1900, Mr. Halkett became editor and introduced the double column, Mr. Astor held out against this novelty, and all his stories stand in a solid block upon the page. He chose, too, his own illustrators, and indulged a fancy for tinted illustrations, anticipating the practice of our present magazine by several years.

Ever-Changing Permanence

Looking backward over these twenty-one years one is conscious of vast and far-reaching changes; I think, however, that they lie more upon the surface than at the central heart of things. A good story or a good poem remains

SIR DOUGLAS STRAIGHT,

Associated with Lord Frederick Hamilton in the editorship of the earliest issues of "The Pall Mall Magazine."

good; the work that deals with the permanent human issues has nothing to fear from time. Still, we have changed, and our readers with us.

I have already ventured the opinion that the serious readers of to-day are more to be found among our working classes than among our aristocracy and the men of business in whose enterprises so many of our workers are enlisted. The aristocracy has forsaken art and letters for sport; the man of business needs all his leisure for outdoor recreation and leaves the pursuit of literature to his women folk and those in his employment. Hence a new patronage, a new audience which in many respects has altered both the manner and the matter of our authors.

During the first two years of the magazine's existence no single paper dealing with sport was printed, and only gradually do such subjects as cricket, shooting, golf, and hunting take their place beside more serious features. And again, though social questions are discussed, they are discussed by experts and have not yet hypnotised the popular story-teller. To-day, of course, the prominent novelist is become an unofficial politician, and I need only instance the more recent work of Messrs Kipling, Wells and Galsworthy to prove my point. I am well aware that Dickens, Meredith, Disraeli, Thomas Hardy, and that barely recognised genius, Samuel Butler, deal largely in social and political ideas, they strike however a less partizan note and the story-teller is at least as much to the fore as the reformer. And, leaving this topic, which in itself is worthy of a special article, I find one change which cannot fail to take its place in any history of English literature. I allude to the discovery of the short story.

Relatively speaking the short story is a quite recent discovery, and just as epoch-making an invention as the sonnet, and doubtless it owes a great deal to the popular magazine with whose rise it synchronises, and with whose decline it would grow rarer and, maybe, disappear.

The Period of the Short Story

The period covered by our own PALL MALL may roughly be described as the age of the short story, and the difficulty of this particular form seems very evident when one reflects that only some half-dozen writers in the English tongue are generally acknowledged as its masters. Without Bret Harte, Kipling, W. W. Jacobs, and Henry James, for instance, there would be very little left; and to those ought certainly to be added Browning with his unforgettable *Men and Women*. The good, the middling and the bad short story are, however,

Hawkes

MR G. S. HALKETT,

Who became art-editor of the magazine whilst it was still under Lord Frederick Hamilton's editorship in 1897, and thereafter himself occupied the editorial chair from 1900 to 1905.

ubiquitous, an important product of the age and characteristic of its accomplishment and limitations. It has interested me to look over the shorter pieces of some of the earlier men, and I find that while Dickens will produce an excellent "little novel," he fails lamentably as a rival to Kipling. Early in *Nicholas Nickleby*, to take a familiar example, he has two short stories that are told by travellers snowbound at an inn. I venture to prophesy that either one of these, properly typed and sent out under an assumed name, would be rejected (and I daresay go unrecognised) by every editor in London. To-day there are dozens of men who, as writers of the short story, could give Dickens points and a beating.

Another change which must strike all of us may be described as a far greater rapidity of attack, a general acceleration which has come over the art of fiction. We live in huge cities whose watch-word is speed and which develop a mental agility unknown to our forefathers. This swifter mind must feed on swifter meat. Life actually has become like a play seen in a moving picture theatre; we make six appointments for an afternoon where we made three. Tube and taxi help us to double the surface activities at least, and our present civilisation has little room for other than surface activities. This development naturally finds its reflection in all arts, and fiction moves at double speed accordingly. And hand-in-hand with this development has arisen a pathetic demand for optimism and the assurance that everything will come out right. Failure, nowadays, is so cruel a business that few people have the courage to occupy their minds with it outside office hours. They see and dwell enough upon it there, and the popular writer has to make for romance and a happy ending, as never he had to make before. Nowadays, in our fiction at least, every private carries a millionaire's baton in his knapsack, every woman is perfect and beautiful at once, and the detective invariably gets home on the mean criminal, though there are occasional heroic rascals who must be preferred to the detective.

A New and Disillusioned Generation

One finds a growing tendency towards these absurd directions; yet looking around me I see a new generation rapidly arising, quite disillusioned, very much in revolt, and swearing by profounder gods than those which preside over material success. That this younger world is bound to affect our publications I have no doubt. Already it has created a demand for a literature of disillusion, supporting Compton Mackenzie, Hugh Walpole and J. D. Beresford, whose remarkable novel *Goslings* would hardly have found a publisher ten years back. And its quieter moods are reflected in the success of James Stephens, Rabindranath Tagore, and such noble work as that produced by Algernon Blackwood.

Leaving these considerations, one notes a further important change which has come over the magazine world. To-day, as often as not, a periodical is run in the interests of shareholders eager for dividends, and the *kudos* of ownership is all but a vanished ideal. I remember how years ago there was many a capitalist who, rather than be associated with the pill or soap to which he owed his fortune, preferred to be known as the proprietor of a journal, even though he drew no income, or made a loss. It was an innocent vanity and one that is disappearing. A more businesslike attitude prevails, and, from the writer's point of view, the change is for the better. The big business houses pay well and promptly; they have little use for the tyro or for what is known as "cheap copy." Likewise they have all but put an end to the speculative sheet, which paid you if it succeeded and left you in the lurch when it dragged on. Well I remember dunning such old-time ventures, and even sitting on doorsteps and refusing to go away until I was paid and could appease a long-suffering landlady. In the nineties such experiences were pretty common; to-day I believe they are growing rare. Indeed so happy-go-lucky were we at that time that I remember handing over the manuscript of a volume of essays to quite a prominent publisher, who accepted it, went bankrupt, and in the confusion of events mislaid my masterpiece. To this day I have never recovered it, and its whereabouts is an unravelled mystery. The typewriting machine, taken in conjunction with the more systematised organisation of our business houses, has put an end to such adventures.

Tendencies

Looking back over this period—and I do not think I am tempted to praise that which was at the expense of that which is—I do find that the writer, like most other people, is forced to stand less on his dignity than was the case with the Victorians. Competition is keener, good work more easily forgotten, and criticism less authoritative. I find poets whose sole claim to distinction is that they were selling fried fish or hawking bananas when some fortunate publisher discovered them, artists who create a sensation by exhibiting a portrait of a man who is standing on his head, and essayists who have attracted instant recognition by declaring with all the emphasis at their command that black is white and, if need be, purple. With too many of us it has become an ambition to figure as "the latest craze." That way lie paragraphs, notoriety, boom—and sudden death.

Certainly it is a good time for the man who does the odd, the unexpected, and keeps it up. He, at least, is sure to get an immediate hearing and, in some cases possibly, may hold what he has won. And it is also a satisfactory age for the man who regards his work as a trade, and with this has a capacity for giving the public exactly what it wants. The really big writer has never had an easy time and never will have, save if, by a lucky chance, he hits upon a subject that is topical. His chief asset to-day as ever, is longevity. Only let him live long enough and he will by sheer persistence obtain recognition and a belated reward.

Albert Kinross.

The Mermaid

By George A. Birmingham

Illustrated by
Henry Mathes

WE were on our way home from Inishmore where we had spent two days—Peter O'Flaherty among his relatives—for everyone on the island was kin to him—I among friends who gave me a warm welcome when I go to them. The island lies some seventeen miles from the coast. We started on our homeward sail with a fresh westerly wind. Shortly after midday it backed round to the north and grew lighter. At five o'clock we were stealing along very gently through calm water with our mainsail boomed out against the shroud. The jib and foresail were drooping in limp folds. An hour later the mainsheet was hanging in the water, and the boat drifted with the tide. Peter, crouching in the fore part of the cockpit, hissed through his clenched teeth which is the way in which he whistles for a wind. He glanced all round the horizon searching for signs of a breeze. His eyes rested finally on the sun, which lay low among some light fleecy clouds. He gave it as his opinion that when it reached the point of setting it 'might draw a light air after it from the eastward.' For that it appeared we were to wait. I shrank from toil with the heavy sweeps. So, I am sure did Peter, who is a good man in a boat but averse from unnecessary

All rights reserved

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

labour. And there was really no need to row. The tide was carrying us homeward, and our position was pleasant enough. Save for the occasional drag of a block against the horse we had achieved unbroken silence and almost perfect peace.

We drifted slowly past Carrigeen Glos, a low, sullen line of rocks. A group of cormorants either gorged with mackerel fry or hopeless of an evening meal, perched together at one end of the reef, and stared at the setting sun. A few terns swept round and round overhead, soaring or sliding downwards with easy motion. A large seal lay basking on a bare rock just above the water's edge. I pointed it out to Peter, and he said it was a pity I had not got my rifle with me. I did not agree with him. If I had brought the rifle Peter would have insisted on my shooting at the seal. I should certainly not have hit it on purpose, for I am averse from injuring gentle creatures; but I might perhaps have killed or wounded it by accident, for my shooting is very uncertain. In any case I should have broken nature's peace, and made a horrible commotion. Perhaps the seal heard Peter's remark or divined his feeling of hostility. It flopped across the rock and slid gracefully into the sea. We saw it afterwards swimming near the boat, looking at us with its curiously human, tender eyes.

"A man might mistake it for a mermaid," I said.

"He'd have to be a fool altogether that would do the like," said Peter.

He was scornful; but the seal's eyes were human. They made me think of mermaids.

"Them ones," said Peter, "is entirely different from seals. You might see a seal any day in fine weather. They're plenty. But the other ones—But sure you wouldn't care to be hearing about them."

"I've heard plenty about them," I said, "but it was all poetry or nonsense. You know well enough, Peter, that there's no such thing as a mermaid."

Peter filled his pipe slowly and lit it. I could see by the way he puffed at it that he was full of pity and contempt for my scepticism.

"Come now," I said, "did you ever see a mermaid?"

"I did not," said Peter, "but my mother was acquainted with one. That was in Inishmore, where I was born and reared."

I waited. The chance of getting Peter to tell an interesting story is to wait patiently. Any attempt to goad him on by asking questions is like striking before a fish is hooked. The chance of getting either story or fish is spoiled.

"There was a young fellow in the island them times," said Peter, "called Anthony O'Flaherty. A kind of nevvy of my father's he was, and a very fine man. There wasn't his equal at running or hopping, and they say he was terrible daring on the sea. That was before my mother was born, but she heard tell of what he did. When she knew him he was like an old man, and the heart was gone out of him."

At this point Peter stopped. His pipe had gone out. He relit it with immense deliberation. I made a mistake. By way of keeping the conversation going I asked a question.

"Did he see a mermaid?"

"He did," said Peter, "and what's more he married one."

There Peter stopped again abruptly, but with an air of finality. He had, so I gathered, told me all he was going to tell me about the mermaid. I had blundered badly in asking my question. I suppose that some note of unsympathetic scepticism in my tone suggested to Peter that I was inclined to laugh at him. I did my best to retrieve my position. I sat quite silent and stared at the peak of the mainsail. The I took on the horse ruthful occasionally. The sun's rim touched the horizon. At last Peter was reassured and began again.

"It was my mother told me about it, and she knew, for many's the time she did be playing with the young lads, but being no more than a little gurleen at the time. Seven of them there was, and the second eldest was the one age

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

"And the first thing Anthony's hand touched was one of the cloaks. He didn't know which of them it belonged to, and he didn't care. . . . He took it back with him into the water. . ." (*page 620*)

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

with my mother. That was after herself left him."

"Herself" was vague enough, but I did not venture to ask another question. I took my eyes off the peak of the mainsail and fixed them inquiringly on Peter. It was as near as I dared go to asking a question.

"Herself," said Peter, "was one of them ones."

He nodded sideways over the gunwale of the boat. The sea, though still calm, was beginning to be moved by that queer restlessness which comes on it at sunset. The tide eddied in mysteriously oily swirls. The rocks to the eastward of us had grown dim. A gull flew by overhead uttering wailing cries. The graceful terns had disappeared. A cormorant, flying so low that its wing-tips broke the water, sped across our bows to some far resting-place. I fell into a mood of real sympathy with stories about mermaids. I think Peter felt the change which had come over me.

"Anthony O'Flaherty," said Peter, "was a young man when he saw them first. It was in the little bay back west of the island, and my mother never rightly knew what he was doing there in the middle of the night, but there he was. It was the bottom of a low spring tide, and there's rocks off the end of the bay that's uncovered at the ebb of the springs. You've maybe seen them."

I have seen them, and Peter knew it well. I have seen more of them than I want to. There was an occasion when Peter and I lay at anchor in that bay, and a sudden shift of wind set us to beating out at three o'clock in the morning. The rocks were not uncovered then, but the waves were breaking fiercely over them. We had little room for tacking, and I am not likely to forget the time we went about a few yards to windward of them. The stretch of wild surf under our lee looked ghastly white in the dim twilight of the dawn. Peter knew what I was thinking.

"It was calm enough the night Anthony O'Flaherty was there," he said, "and there was a moon shining, pretty near a full moon, so Anthony could see plain. Well, there was three of them in it, and they playing themselves."

"Mermaids?"

This time my voice expressed full sympathy. The sea all round us was rising in queer round little waves, though there was no wind. The boom snatched at the blocks as the boat rocked. The salt was ghostly white. The vision of a mermaid would not have surprised me greatly.

"The beautifullest ever was seen," said Peter, "and neither shift nor shirt on them, only just themselves, and the long hair of them. Straight it was and black, only for a taste of green in it. You wouldn't be making a mistake between the like of them and seals, not if you'd seen them right, the way Anthony O'Flaherty did."

Peter made this reflection a little bitterly. I was afraid that the recollection of my unfortunate remark about seals might have stopped him telling the story, but it did not.

"Once Anthony had seen them," he said, "he couldn't rest content without he'd be going to see them again. Many a night he went and saw neither sight nor light of them, for it was only at spring tides that they'd be there, on account of the rocks not being uncovered any other time. But at the bottom of the low springs they were there right enough, and sometimes they'd be swimming in the sea and sometimes they'd be sitting on the rocks. It was wonderful the songs they'd sing—like the sound of the sea set to music was what my mother told me, and she was told by them that knew. The people did be wondering what had come over Anthony, for he was different like from what he had been, and nobody knew what took him out of his house in the middle of the night at the spring tides. There was a girl that they had laid down for him to marry, and Anthony had no objection to her before he seen them ones; but after he had seen them he wouldn't look at the girl. She had a middling good fortune too, but sure he didn't care about that."

I could understand Anthony's feelings. The air of wind which Peter had

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

promised, drawn from its cave by the lure of the departing sun, was filling our head-sails. I hauled in the main-sheet gently hand over hand and belayed it. The boat slipped quietly along close-hauled. The long line of islands which guards the entrance of our bay lay dim before us. Over the shoulder of one of them I could see the lighthouse, still a distinguishable patch of white against the looming grey of the land. The water rippled mournfully under our bows and a long pale wake stretched astern from our counter. "Fortune," banked money, good heifers and even enduringly fruitful fields seemed very little matters to me then. They must have seemed still less—far less, to Anthony O'Flaherty after he had seen those white sea-maidens with their green-black hair.

"There was a woman on the island in those times," said Peter, "a very aged woman, and she had a kind of plaster which she made which cured the cancer, drawing it out by the roots, and she could tell what was good for the chin cough, and the women did like to have her with them when their children was born, she being knowledgable in them matters. I'm told the priests didn't like her, for there was things she knew which it mightn't be right that anyone would know, things that's better left to the clergy. Whether she guessed what was the matter with Anthony, or whether he up and told her straight my mother never heard. It could be that he told her, for many a one used to go to her for a charm when the butter wouldn't come, or a cow, maybe, was pining; so it wouldn't surprise me if Anthony went to her."

Peter crept aft. He took a pull on the jib-sheet and belayed it again, but I do not believe that he really cared much about the set of the sail. That was his excuse. He wanted to be nearer to me. There is something in stories like this, told in dim twilight, with dark waters sighing near at hand, which makes men feel the need of close human companionship. Peter seated himself on the floor boards at my feet, and I felt a certain comfort in the touch of his arm on my leg.

"Well," he went on, "according to the old hag—and what she said was true enough, however she learnt it—them ones doesn't go naked all the time, but only when they're playing themselves on the rocks at low tide, the way Anthony seen them. Mostly they have a kind of a cloak that they wear, and they take the same cloaks off of them when they're up above the water and they lay them down on the rocks. If so be that a man could put his hand on e'er a cloak, the one that owned it would have to follow him whether she wanted to or not. If it was to the end of the world she'd have to follow him, or to Spain, or to America, or wherever he might go. And what's more, she'd have to do what he bid her, be the same good or bad, and be with him if he wanted her, so long as he kept the cloak from her. That's what the old woman told Anthony, and she was a skilful woman well knowing the nature of beasts and men, and of them that's neither beasts nor men. You'll believe me now that Anthony wasn't altogether the same as other men when I tell you that he laid his mind down to get his hand down on one of the cloaks. He was a good swimmer, so he was, which is what few men on the island can do, and he knew that he'd be able to fetch out to the rock where them ones played themselves."

I was quite prepared to believe that Anthony was inspired by a passion far out of the common. I know nothing more terrifying than the chill embrace of the sea at night-time. To strike out through the slimy weeds which lie close along the surface at the ebb point of a spring tide, to clamber on low rocks, half awash for an hour or two at midnight, these are things which I would not willingly do.

"The first time he went for to try it," said Peter, "he felt a bit queer in himself and he thought it would do him no harm if he was to bless himself. So he did, just as he was stepping off the shore into the water. Well, it might as well have been a shot he fired, for the minute he did it they were off and their cloaks along with them, and Anthony was left there. It was the

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

"Once he had seen them, he couldn't rest content without he'd be going to see them again. . . . At the bottom of the low springs they'd be there right enough, and sometimes they'd be swimming in the sea and sometimes they'd be sitting on the rocks" (*page 617*).

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

sign of the cross had them frightened, for that same is what they can't stand, not having souls that religion would be any use to It was the old woman told Anthony that after, and you'd think it would have been a warning to him not to make or meddle with the like of them any more But it only made him the more determined He went about without speaking to man or woman, and if anybody spoke to him he'd curse terrible, till the time of the next spring tide Then he was off to the hay again, and sure enough them ones was there The water was middling rough that night, but it didn't daunt Anthony It pleased him, for he thought he'd have a better chance of getting to the rocks without them taking notice of him if there was some noise loud enough to drown the noise he'd be making himself So he crept out to the point of the cliff on the south side of the bay, which is as near as he could get to the rocks You remember that?"

I did On the night when we beat out of the bay against a rising westerly wind we went about once under the shadow of the cliff and, almost before we had full way on the boat, stayed her again, beside the rocks Anthony's swim, though terrifying, was short

"That time he neither blessed himself nor said a prayer, but slipped into the water and off with him, swimming with all his strength They didn't see him, for they were too busy with their playing to take much notice, and of course they wouldn't be expecting a man to be there Without Anthony had shouted they wouldn't have heard him, for the sea was loud on the rocks and their own singing was louder So Anthony got there and he crept up on the rock behind them, and the first thing his hand touched was one of the cloaks He didn't know which of them it belonged to, and he didn't care It wasn't any one of the three in particular he wanted, for they were all much about the same to look at, only finer than any woman ever was seen So he rolled the cloak round his neck, the way he'd have his arms free for swimming and back with him into the water, heading for shore as fast as he was able"

"And she followed him?" I asked

"She did so From that day till the day she left him she followed him, and she did what she was bid, only for one thing She wouldn't go to mass, and when the chapel bell rang she'd hide herself The sound of it was what she couldn't bear The people thought that queer, and there was a deal of talk about it in the island, some saying she must be a Protestant, and more thinking that she might be something worse But nobody had a word to say against her any other way She was a good enough housekeeper, washing and making and mending for Anthony, and minding the children Seven of them there was, and all boys"

The easterly breeze freshened as the night fell I could see the great eye of the lighthouse blinking at me on the weather side of the boat It became necessary to go about, but I gave the order to Peter very reluctantly He handled the head-sheets, and then, instead of settling down in his old place, leaned his elbows on the coaming and stared into the sea We were steadily approaching the lighthouse I felt that I must run the risk of asking him a question

"What happened in the end?" I asked

"The end, is it? Well, in the latter end she left him But there was things happened before that Whether it was the way the priests talked to him about her—there was a priest in it them times that was too fond of interfering, and that's what some of them are—or whether there was goings-on within in the inside of the house that nobody knew anything about—and there might have been, for you couldn't tell what one of them ones might do or mightn't Whatever way it was, Anthony took to drinking more than he ought There was poteen made on the island then, and whisky was easy come by if a man wanted it, and Anthony took too much of it"

Peter paused and then passed judgment, charitably, on Anthony's conduct "I wouldn't be too hard on a man for taking a drop an odd time"

I was glad to hear Peter say that. I myself had found it necessary from

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

time to time, for the sake of an old friendship, not to be too hard on Peter.

"Nobody would have blamed him," Peter went on, "if he had behaved himself when he had a drop taken; but that's what he didn't seem able to do. He bet her. Sore and heavy he bet her, and that's what no woman, whether she was a natural woman or one of the other kind, could be expected to put up with. Not that she said a word. She didn't. Nor nobody would have known that he bet her if he hadn't taken to beating the young lads along with her. It was them told what was going on. But there wasn't one on the island would interfere. The people did be wondering that she didn't put the fear of God into Anthony; but of course that's what she couldn't do on account of his having the cloak hid away from her. So long as he had that she was bound to put up with whatever he did. But it wasn't for ever.

"The house was going to rack and ruin with the way Anthony wouldn't mind it on account of his being three-parts drunk most of the time. At last the rain was coming in through the roof. When Anthony saw that he came to himself a bit and sent for my grandfather and settled with him to put a few patches of new thatch on the worst places. My grandfather was the best man at thatching that there was in the island in them days, and he took the job though he misdoubted whether he'd ever be paid for it. Anthony never came next or nigh him when he was working, which shows that he hadn't got his senses rightly. If he had he'd have kept an eye on what my grandfather was doing, knowing what he knew, though of course my grandfather didn't know. Well one day my grandfather was dragging off the old thatch near the chimney. It was middling late in the evening, as it might be six or seven o'clock, and he was thinking of stopping his work when all of a sudden he came on what he thought might be an old petticoat bundled away in the thatch. It was red, be said, but when he put his hand on it he knew it wasn't flannel, nor it wasn't cloth, nor it wasn't like anything he'd ever felt before in all his life. There was a hole in the roof where my grandfather had the thatch stripped, and he could see down into the kitchen. Anthony's wife was there with the youngest of the boys in her arms. My grandfather was as much in dread of her as every other one, but he thought it would be no more than civil to tell her what he'd found.

"'Begging your pardon, ma'am,' he said, 'but I'm after finding what maybe belongs to you hid away in the thatch.'

"With that he threw down the red cloak, for it was a red cloak he had in his hand. She didn't speak a word, but she laid down the baby out of her arms and she walked out of the house. That was the last my father seen of her. And that was the last anyone on the island seen of her, unless maybe Anthony. Nobody knows what he saw. He stopped off the drink from that day; but it wasn't much use his stopping it. He used to go round at spring tides to the bay where he had seen her first. He did that five times, or maybe six. After that he took to his bed and died. It could be that his heart was broke."

We slipped past the point of the pier. Peter crept forward and crouched on the deck in front of the mast. I peered into the gloom to catch sight of our mooring-buoy.

"Let her away a bit yet," said Peter. "Now luff her, luff her all you can."

The boat edged up into the wind. Peter, flat on his stomach, grasped the buoy and hauled it on board. The fore-sheets beat their tattoo on the deck. The boom swung sharply across the boat.

Ten minutes later we were leaning together across the boom gathering in the mainsail.

"What became of the boys?" I asked.

"Is it Anthony O'Flaherty's boys? The last of them went to America twenty years ago. But sure that was before you came to these parts."

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

[Deciphered from an Egyptian Papyrus apparently written B.C. 1725]

IN this tenth year of the reign of King Amasis, beloved of the gods, I, Ru, a priest of Isis, imprisoned in the city of Raamses, the treasure city, being questioned by the High Court of Egypt, before which I am to be tried, do write this as my defence against the crime whereof I am falsely accused. I call Horus, Anubis and Apis to witness that as for the death of Heva, the Chaldean wife of my brother Poti-pherah, whom may Osiris receive at the last, I am innocent of it, though concerning certain offences against my brother I know too well that I am guilty. And my judges, who are blest with the gift of supreme wisdom, will believe that a murderer shall perish, but that an innocent man, like unto myself, shall spend his years in prosperity.

My brother Poti pherah, a captain of Pharaoh's guard, dwells with his wives in the city beloved of Osiris. In his house is the smell of sweet spices, and on the walls, between lofty pillars, are onyx and jasper, and in the chambers of rest are candlesticks and layers of brass, rich vestments are there also, and ointment made from the rose. Moreover, when my brother sits down to eat, clad in fine twined linen, upon a cushion of crimson silk, the handmaidens wipe his feet with perfumed napkins, while them that serve set before him fish garnished with leeks, or upon a charger the flesh of a goat, or of a hart, or of a roebuck; and beside the house is a broad garden decked with fruit trees, where, in the twilight, at the voluptuous hour, when the singers come to sing, my brother drinks wine, even old wine, which is the wine of content and giveth peace unto the wise.

Behold, this my brother came to me a year ago, saying: "Thou knowest that I have taken a wife from out of the land of Chaldea, and my spirit is vexed because she worships not the gods of Egypt, and I have no delight in her, because she

"The city beloved of Osiris."

feareth not Osiris neither respecteth his law. Come therefore thou, which art a young man and a learned priest, and live with me in my house for a season, to expound to her the wisdom of our gods." On the following day, at the heat of the noontide, when I came to my brother's house, the slaves anointed my beard while I sat in the dark, cool hall, and I heard the faint rippling sound of a harp touched with running fingers, surpassing sweetly, so that my heart was melted as with the murmur of familiar voices—even the voices of them which are no more. Now, when I was led into the upper chamber, which hath an alabaster floor, I beheld the Chaldean wife of my brother Poti pherah, whose name was Heva, and she was exceeding comely, even as pleasant to the eye as a cluster of ripe grapes in the vineyard. When she rose from the harp, her handmaidens, which worked upon skeins of many-coloured, brilliant threads, arose also and saluted me. Then saw I that Heva, as she stood before me, was clad in a fair garment, her feet being shod with fine sandals, and about her body was a curious girdle, and her eyes sparkled like dew upon the mountains. When she clapped her hands they set before me baked cakes with savoury sweets and the purple wine of content, wherewith I refreshed myself, and dwelt many days in the house of my brother Poti pherah. Whereof each day expounded I to Heva the mysteries of Isis and of Osiris, but she turned a deaf ear to my words, and as for Horus, Apis and Anubis, verily she laughed them to scorn. Moreover talked I with her about her soul and of its eternal destiny, but she cried "My soul! first show me what is my soul, and then will I ponder its immortality." Also when I spoke to her of death, she said, "Is it not a sleep from which no cock-crow awakens?" So I became as one that is sorrow-bitten, and sadness came upon me like rising water, because she would not withdraw her thoughts from the magicians, the soothsayers and the astrologers of her native land. At which time there came among us a stranger, a Hebrew, named Joseph, whom the Egyptians call Zaphnath, who knew not the gods of Egypt, and whom I hated because

of his strange god. Wherefore I said unto my brother Poti-pherah, "Lo, thou art a wise man—yea, in thy life thou shalt seek silver and find gold: hast thou done this thing to mock me, to bring this man, a worshipper of strange gods, into this thine house to rule over us?" But Poti-pherah hearkened not, but put Joseph

—*She was exceeding comely*

over all his household, and set his ring upon his finger, because he had found favour in his eyes. During which time Joseph often talked with Heva of the far countries beyond the turquoise land,* where they were born, till my heart stirred within me, as a voice speaking, to hear them communing, with the softness of music in the

* Arabia Petræa

night watches, of their strange gods, of charmers and wizards, and of them that dwell by the river, the river Euphrates. My life also became like unto some strange sorrow that is wreathed about with joy; for I hated Joseph, because of his strange god, and I loved Heva, my brother's wife, seeing I am a young man and she was fairer than a south land with springs of sweet water. Nevertheless felt I as leper among men, for I said to myself: "Am not I a priest of Isis, wherefore the love of women is not for me?"

At that time it came to pass that Heva's child died, and her heart died within her and became as a stone, wherefore she sent for her husband that he should comfort her; but behold, Poti pherah sat at meat with his Ethiopian wife, and mourned not for the child that was dead, even the child of Heva. Then reproved I my brother, saying, "Wilt thou, who art a wise-hearted man, drive this woman to the follies of despair?" But my brother was merry, for he and his Ethiopian wife had emptied a gourd filled with the wine of content, wherefore he mocked me, saying: "Thy words are as wind, O priest of Isis, and thou that art celibate wilt some day learn that the man who knows not love is as one lost in the desert, whose lips are parched, and who drinks no wine."

But that evening, when the glory of the sunset had faded, Joseph talked with Heva beside the pomegranates upon the housetop, and his eyes brimmed with tears; whereat I knew that he thought upon Heva's sorrow, and that for this musing he became beautiful in her eyes as one that wears a crown. So that evening, and many evenings after, they knew not that I was near them behind the pomegranates hearkening to their words. For they spoke much together—Joseph telling of the pleasant fields beyond the turquoise land, where the feet of his childhood had trodden, of the vineyards and wheatfields, and the reapers binding the sheaves of corn. Also spake he of his brethren, which cast him into a desert pit that he should die, and how he had been taken thence and sold into Egypt, the sun land, even into the house of my brother Poti-pherah. And he said: "Out of the abode of my father was I cast into a pit to become the prey of strangers, and from thence, even from the jaws of death, was I snatched that I might behold thee—the fairest of women. For thus it is written: 'Joys we shall have that blossomed in the shade, and griefs that out of sweetest dreams awoke.'" Whereat I saw that the words of Joseph's mouth were sweet in Heva's ears, and my soul abhorred him.

One night I lay alone upon the housetop in weariness of spirit, as one that is ill of the burning ague, and my head throbbed; and in the silence of evening, in the silence of night, and again in the silence of dawn, I prayed that Isis would send a blight upon Joseph, that he might become as a rush without water, that wilteth away; or that a sword should pierce his body so that his tongue might cleave to the roof of his mouth. Then at break of day, before the sun rising, when the cool wind blew, I went half a day's journey into the desert, unto a place where dwelt a man of subtle understanding, that was wise in the ways of familiar spirits, to whom I said: "I know that thou art a silent man, that fetchest knowledge from afar: behold, now, my heart takes no rest in the day time nor in the night season for thinking upon the death of a man and upon my sinful love for a woman. Tell me, therefore, I pray thee, what is death and what is love, that I may ponder them hereafter in wisdom, and not as a fool." Which, when he had heard, the man that was familiar with spirits searched the sky and considered the chambers of the South and the stars, which are the eyes of Eternity, while I waited for his words as one that eagerly looks for the dawn which shall mark the beginning of a happier day. Then, when the morning stars sang together in the east, he called to me, saying, "Do we know more than the beasts of

"I saw also the soldiers of Pharaoh"

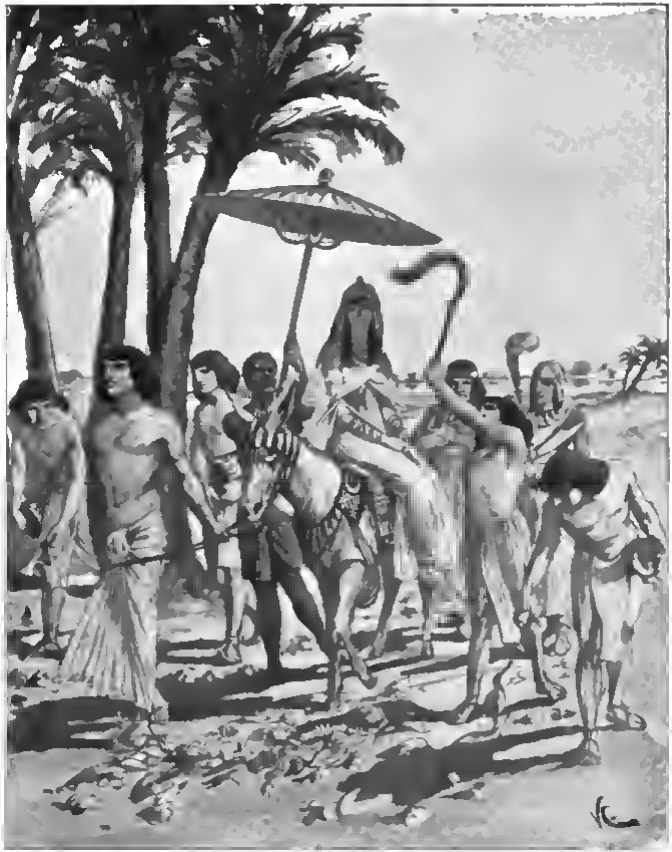
the earth, or are we wiser than the fowls of heaven? Know, O priest, that the only thing in life worth thinking of is death, and that love is the resting of the affections."

When I heard these words, I knelt down weeping, and prayed before Isis. And Isis comforted me, saying: "What hast thou, my son, to do with death, since, when the darkness of thy little life is ended, Osiris shall give thee the gift of everlasting life? Furthermore, hast thou not made a covenant with me? and how then shalt thou think upon the love of woman?"

So I turned me again to the habitations of men, and beheld the husbandmen threshing grain upon the floor, while the labourers in the vineyard trod the fulness of the winepress; I tarried also to watch the cutting of stone, the carving of wood, and the gravers of carbuncles with their graving tools; I saw also the soldiers of Pharaoh, the brazen chariots that shone like gold, the horsemen, the slingers, and them that bear darts, lastly, at the gate of the city, the city beloved of Osiris, rode Pharaoh's daughter upon a white ass, while three hundred slaves strewed fresh flowers before her.

When I came back into the house of my brother Poti-pherah I was heavy-hearted, insomuch that my soul dried away, for I was not able to bear the burden of my life. So I shaved my head and ate bitter herbs, thinking upon all the days of my youth, upon the days of gladness and the solemn days; and I cried aloud, in the thick darkness of the night, "Shall it be that Osiris will give the wife of my brother into the hand of a stranger!" At which thought I was faint with love of her, and the craving of my secret love was as the yearning of a miser after his lost treasure; yet was I ashamed, and blushed to lift up my face before Isis. Nevertheless I said, "Such a thing shall not be in the land of Egypt, the sun land", wherefore I began to spy upon them by day and by night, that I might take them unawares.

It came to pass in the autumn, the evening of the year, at the time of the first ripe grapes, that my brother Poti-pherah made a feast with the music of the lute,



"Lastly, rode Pharaoh's daughter."

the flower of the crimson rose, the wine cask emptied to the lees. And he sat at meat with the young men, and there were set before them flesh pots fragrant with leeks, and they became merry with wine, and when Poti-pherah had feasted plenteously he straightway rose up to dance. Now, Heva lay in her room, for her soul was sore vexed Nevertheless I watched, and while the feast went on she and Joseph met together privily in a room apart, she going to meet him like a bird that flies upon outstretched wings, so that I could see the blush upon her cheeks, like the flush upon a pomegranate, as she stretched forth her white arms towards him and kissed him upon the lips and upon the brow. Then Joseph fell at her

feet, crying "O God, forgive me!" though which god he meant I know not, neither could I hear all they said for the noise of laughter and the beating of timbrels in the hall where Poti-pherah feasted. Then Heva raised Joseph from his knees, and, laying her hand upon his shoulder, said: "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, is there no place, far from the Egyptians and their gods with heads and hearts of beasts, whither we may flee ere the eyelids of the morning are opened? Here we are alike slaves, bought by the same master: let us be free in some distant country, where we may forget the past, and where I will be to thee as a flowering vine trellised upon a south wall" But Joseph answered: "How shall I, who wear my lord's ring upon my finger, being set by him over his household, dishonour him as an enemy, even as a thief in the night? My father, who is a just man, gave me this precept—that I should do unto others as I would be done by: how, then, shall I sin against God, against my benefactor, and against thee? If we defile our bodies on earth, our souls hereafter shall be crimson as blood; let me, therefore, depart hence from this great temptation to my own country, that, though our bodies be parted for a time on earth, yet shall our souls be joined for ever in heaven, and thou wilt be as beautiful there as here, and there shall our eyes meet, for we shall not be ashamed" Then looked they fixedly upon one another, but ere they could speak again I stood before them and they were amazed At which my blood boiled with fierce anger, my brain also burned at the thought of their love, and I raised my arms to smite Joseph, but he fled aghast from before me out of the room Then turned I to where Heva stood, saying: "I have but to declare to Poti-pherah what I have heard, and he will curse thee for the iniquity that thou hast conceived, and thou shalt be scourged by slaves, and Joseph, thy lover, shall be stoned to death before thine eyes—yea, his blood shall spatter thy face." Then Heva trembled and blanched, gazing fixedly upon me without speaking, for she was a woman, and sore afraid. "Notwithstanding," I said, "thou mayest save his life if thou wilt lift up thy voice and cry mightily, and when the household shall come, then shalt thou declare that this stranger raised his hand upon thee to do thee violence, and thou shalt point to his garment which lieth upon the floor. So mayest thou be commended, and although Joseph be cast into prison, not a hair of his head shall perish, and thy secret shall be as the pearl at the bottom of the sea." But Heva spurned me, saying "Thou man of unclean lips, such infamy were more bitter than death: go, tell whom thou wilt thy tale, and I will declare that I am innocent, that the world may judge which of us is a liar."

Then I turned to leave her, to declare all these things to Poti-pherah; seeing which Heva caught me swiftly, sobbing and saying, "Be it as thou commandest, O cruel heart"; and she lifted up her voice and cried aloud, so that they which feasted arose, and Poti-pherah with his young men stood before us Then Heva said, as I had bidden her "This stranger whom thou hast set over thy house raised his hand upon me to do me violence, but I lifted up my voice, whereupon he let fall his garment and fled away." And I, Rui the priest, standing by, said "I heard the voice of Heva and ran hither, and behold, the stranger whom thou hast set over thy house fled out of my sight" Then Poti-pherah commended Heva, saying: "I will make this thing known unto the world, that all generations may know that thou didst lift up thy voice" Then was Joseph brought into the room before all the company, and Poti-pherah smote him in the face and took off the ring from his finger, and commanded him to be cast into prison

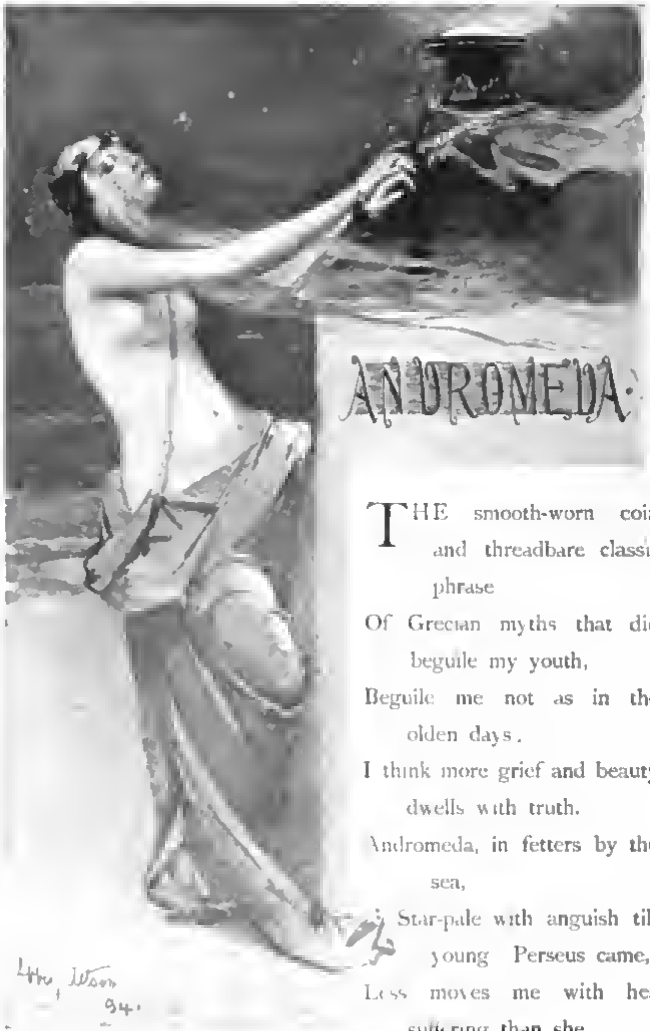
For many days after these things had come to pass I walked abroad in bitterness or lay sleepless by night on my bed beneath the stars, with a dreadful sound like

the clamour of Heva's voice ringing ever in my ears, crying out that my love was a sin against my brother. Wherefore, when Poti-pherah took the ring that had been set upon Joseph's finger and set it upon mine, saying, "Thou, O priest, hast been the guardian of mine honour," I felt ashamed. Which ring was of fine gold set about a ruby as red as the blood of a pigeon sacrificed upon the altar. Wherein I beheld a glory greater than the glory of scarlet flowers when the dew rests on them in the morning, likewise saw I there figures fairer than the floating forms of loves; and when the sunlight rested upon the ruby it sparkled as a burning censer, with gleams that seemed to me of love and hate even as the molten ardours of my own soul. Often sat I thus in the glow of the noontide, pursuing in the light of that fateful stone the shining paths of my musings, and finding in it a reflection of my lurid dreams and of the face of Isis, the mother of love.

It happened that one night in a dream, in a vision of the night, in slumber upon my bed, I dreamt that I wandered back through the cycles of time to the golden days when the gods were upon earth making love to the beautiful daughters of men. In which dream I sat down to rest by the water-side, and the willows of the brook covered me with their shade, where no man passed save only the lotus-eaters that dwell in the dim garden of Oblivion, who, as they went, talked of the clasping of hands and the strewing of flowers, whose faces are radiant as the day, for they have put from them the cares of life. But of a sudden came Heva, and she was alone. And she was beautiful as a bird with outstretched wings, even as a bird of rare plumage; and she came close to me, and her breath was like the sweet-briar of the valley. Then said I within myself, "She is a morsel fit for the gods: verily she shall die." And I walked up and down communing with myself, murmuring, "She is the fairest of all the daughters of men: she shall be the bride of Osiris." At which thought I laughed—laughed till the lotus-eaters paused, saying one to the other: "Lo, he is mad!" Then an evil spirit within me awoke, saying "That which thou art about to do, see thou do quickly and tell no man." Wherefore in my dream I caught Heva by the throat, and knelt upon her bosom, clutching her fair neck till my fingers sank in her flesh, which I heeded not till she was dead and her soul in the arms of Osiris.

Now, when I awoke from my slumber, behold it was a dream, and I arose from my bed and was glad, for it was the dawning of the day. But before the house was awake, or ever Poti-pherah stirred, there came a great wailing from the hand-maidens, for on the floor of her chamber Heva lay strangled to death, with deep finger-prints upon her throat. Then I cried aloud to know who had done this evil deed; whereat they answered, "It is none other than thou, O priest of Isis," and they led me away, and carried Heva to Pelusium, the city of the dead. Nevertheless I, Rui, a priest of Isis, do solemnly call Horus, Anubis and Sechet to witness that it was but a dream.

William Waldorf Astor

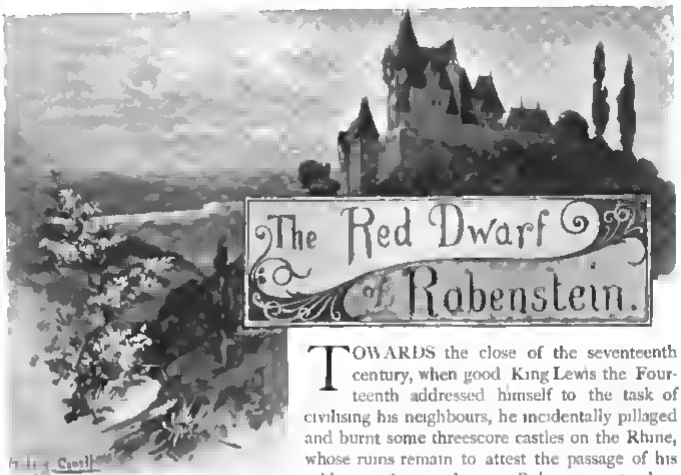


ANDROMEDA.

THE smooth-worn coin and threadbare classic phrase
Of Grecian myths that did beguile my youth,
Beguile me not as in the olden days.
I think more grief and beauty dwells with truth.
Andromeda, in fetters by the sea,
Star-pale with anguish till young Perseus came,
Less moves me with her suffering than she,

The slim girl figure fettered to dark shame
That nightly haunts the park, there, like a shade,
Trailing her wretchedness from street to street.
See where she passes—neither wife nor maid.
How all mere fiction crumbles at her feet!
Here is woe's self, and not the mask of woe:
A legend's shadow shall not move you so!

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH



The Red Dwarf of Rabenstein.

TOWARDS the close of the seventeenth century, when good King Lewis the Fourteenth addressed himself to the task of civilising his neighbours, he incidentally pillaged and burnt some threescore castles on the Rhine, whose ruins remain to attest the passage of his soldiery. Among them is Rabenstein, standing within distant sight of Coblentz, where the waters of the three poetic rivers of Germany, the Rhine, the Neckar and the Mosel, are united.

It is still in fair preservation, for the quick flames left its massive stonework almost intact, and the conquerors, having made short work of its garrison and possessed themselves of everything portable, moved to other fields of action. Its roofs and rafters were consumed, but one may readily follow its ramparts and identify its halls and chambers. In the centre stands a great square keep, which local tradition names the treasure tower, chroniching with gusto the fact that it was as empty when the French burst open its innermost recesses as it is to-day. About it is an open court, heavily carpeted with greensward, whereon, through long sweet summer afternoons, the shadows lengthen and deepen in the dark. Beside this enclosure is a terrace from which the eye commands a long bend of the Rhine flowing past Coblentz, and over whose edge one may look two hundred feet down upon the red rocks below, which to this day, says the legend, show a crimson stain where the Countess of Rabenstein cast herself headlong at the moment when the French came swarming over the drawbridge.

One day, in the autumn of 1890, a small and misshapen man, young yet in years, but with face sharpened and weazened by experience of the bitter side of life, rang the bell which hangs beside the closed gate, and waited patiently for a couple of minutes after its shrill tinkling had died away. The summons was presently answered by a good-natured-looking peasant woman who came from under the raised portcullis in place of the corsleted warder of two centuries ago. The dwarf presented his credentials, at which the woman merely glanced, with a smile at his red hair and freckled face, as she motioned him to enter.

"You are not unexpected," she said; "the master sent word of your coming,—it is wise and thoughtful and like him to place here a custodian of more authority than I or Mina. Your luggage will be here presently? Very well; and your supper shall be ready when you please, in the pantry. We have not many rooms; I will show you yours in the Sundial tower."

The little man followed, limping after her with a shuffling step, and casting a glance this way and that as his guide's chatter directed his attention. This was the refectory—a complete wreck, with foxgloves growing in place of the rushes which once strewed its floor, and nothing left to mark its former use, except the outline of a great chimney, where, probably, the savoury joints were roasted before the eyes of the assembled guests. Yonder a portion of the residence had been restored, wherein the *hochwohlgeboren* Herr von Flulen, a remote offspring of the Rabensteins, installed himself and his daughter on the rare occasions when they visited the ruin, which, with its adjacent vineyard, had descended to them. The very room which the Countess Isolde had occupied, and whence, perhaps, she may have fled on her way to cast herself from the terrace, had been repanelled and made habitable, so far as the present owner's light purse permitted. His daughter Gisela had chosen it partly for association's sake, and partly because she delighted in the incomparable vista which stretched from its single narrow casement towards the Mosel valley.

Arrived at his destination in the Sundial tower, the dwarf presently bestowed his slender effects about him, and that night, after a frugal supper of bread and beans, lay down to sleep with a happier and more tranquil mind than he had known for many a day. His name was Wolfgang Judassohn, and about this sinister appellation gathered the earliest and the most poignant memories of his life. At school the deformity of his stature made him unequal to the sports of other children, and his morbidly sensitive nature was embittered by never-ceasing taunts and gibes. "Had he in truth," queried his schoolmates, "a drop of the accursed blood of Judas in his veins?—or was he descended from them that kept the swine at Gennesaret? And might there be good ground for the Teutonic superstition that the Judassohns are possessed at times by devils, and that in the Middle Ages they intermarried with goblins?" He was very poor, and often in his heart-sick hours the foolish boy thought to himself that had he been born a rich man's heir the world would have had pleasanter things to say. At the age of fourteen he was confirmed in good German fashion, together with a score of lads and maidens; but even here the reproach of his name and of his deformity held the others aloof. Five years of jeering mockery had habituated him to the cruelty of his fellows: he was yet to learn, and that before the altar, the delight with which one sex can humble the other. Of the dozen girls in that year's confirmation class, not one would stand in line with a dwarf, still less near one who bore the ignominious stigma of the false disciple. This, therefore, was a period of profound import in the life of little Wolfgang, and he came thenceforth to think of girls only by the symbol of his confirmation—a pierced heart, significant to his juvenile fancy of that bitter side of life whereof he had received a foretaste.

He grew up a solitary, taciturn lad, wholly dependent upon himself, working for hours daily in his father's cobbler's shop, and reading at evening, by the kitchen firelight, the books he obtained from a working men's reading-room. Upon his birthday, on attaining the age of seventeen, his father made him his first and last present—since he loved queer books—a second-hand German translation of the *Mort d Arthur*. Even this gift was the subject of sarcastic pleasantry; for Wolfgang's birth having occurred on February 29th, he had till then seen only five birthdays, or, as his father phrased it, was but five years old. Even in this, thought the poor lad when leap year came, he was different from others. But the singular gift proved a solace for many ills, for he found in its pages a new life—a life of glamour and brilliance that instantly put out of thought the sordid shame which was all that he personally knew of this world's ways. He conned its pages again and again, growing to know, and at last to love, the characters in whom he found such stately friends, whose equal it was his joy to imagine himself. With Launcelot he wandered forth

in search of knightly adventure, with Merlin he pondered occult arts; he adored Elaine as a slave may bow before the Queen, and spent long hours in conjecturing what might have been the nature of Guinevere's offence. His home, his country and his life, came to be amid those musty, faded days, tarnished with many a stain, but still flushed with the glory of old gold; and it became one of the foibles of his morbid fancy that the noisy trivialities of every day shrivel into nothingness in presence of the eloquent silence of the past.

The routine of his daily life was once illumined for an hour by a single bright spark. One midsummer evening the cobbler took his wife and their progeny to a beer garden to hear a chorus of Tyrolese singers. There was some question whether the dwarf should be included, he looking so forlorn in public, with his big shaggy head and his bent limbs; but his sister interceded, and matters, for once, were decided in his favour. It would not have been easy for the dwarf to describe his emotions as he listened through the starlit evening to that rich, reverberant minstrelsy, thrilling from some halcyon and unimagined dreamland. He whispered to his sister that Heaven must be something like that enchanted garden; but others beside little Judassohn have been bewildered by the witchery of music. A poet has sketched in verse his visit to a ridge above Zermatt, overlooking a dozen glaciers, and commanding the stupendous snow-peaks that stand between Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn. He tells of the stainless snow-masses clean cut against the sky—of an occasional floating film of cloud—of the abysses plunging to violet-tinted depths—of the strain of thrilling music that from the Riffel far below swelled on the breathless air. It was early morning, and amid those sublime solitudes the dreamer's thoughts rose upon the wings of a new and faultless inspiration, illumined by the glory of the sunbeams upon those glistening crests. All that is best in life caught the reflected light of those tranquil altitudes, and seemed no less sublime than they. And still the distant refrain rose and fell. It was a performance no more ambitious than the effort of the virtuosi of a Swiss brass band, but the sound came from so remote a distance that its crudities were lost, and, to the ear of listening poesy, it whispered of the exuberant joy of life and of its undertone of tears. The potent voice was the same as that to which little Judassohn listened. The jodel echoes and the Sennerin's rippling song made his small heart throb, and spoke to him of dreamy retrospects and sweet imaginings and the amorous whisper of an infinite endearment. His eyes filled—whereat his father gruffly threatened him with various familiar pains and penalties when they should be again beneath the parental roof.

Half a dozen years later he obtained from Herr von Flüelen the post of custodian of Rabenstein, at an annual stipend of one hundred thalers, two suits of clothes and board and lodging. He arrived, as we have seen, bringing with him all his worldly possessions, including the *Roman de la Rose*, the legends and ballads of the Rhine, and Schiller's poems. He brought, too, a set of chess, in which exercise he had made himself a proficient of more than ordinary force, and wherein he delighted as dealing with absolute intellectual forces and with combinations akin to the working of pure mathematics. In the end games of the great masters he found a similitude to the prodigious results of the battlefield, and he revived and brought into play the celebrated "theory of groups," which was one of the principles of Ruy Lopez.

The day following his arrival he devoted to familiarising himself with the property of which he was henceforth to be the steward. He paused a moment at midday in the courtyard beside a well of sweet water, whence he drew a measure to moisten the bread and cheese that Mina brought out to him on a platter. She lingered to discourse a little—so few gossips came to Rabenstein, and it was pleasant to see a new face, even if it were only the face of a dwarf. At that well, she informed him, a party

"The French storming party of 1688."

of Cossacks had drunk in 1814, on their way across the Rhine to join Blucher; and in 1688 the French storming party had slaked their thirst where he stood. Yonder, high up on the donjon wall, she pointed to the shattered escutcheon of the Rabensteins, broken where a French soldier, for a jest, had discharged his mousqueton upon it by

the light of the burning roofs. Within the gate tower were fragments of iron bars twisted out of recognition, and above them a single figure of a knight in armour, roughly hewn in stone, with one arm gone, and the other raised aloft, as if in horror at some remembered sights untold. On the highest of all the towers was a tuft of waving green—the fluttering feather of its bygone grandeur. "No one," said Mina, "ever came to visit the ruin: it was remote from the usual route of tourists, and Germans abhorred it because Herr von Flülen would not tolerate the familiar *Restauration* within the grey walls of his ancestors, and all the world knows that a German prefers a restaurant without a ruin to a ruin without a restaurant.

A month had passed when, one afternoon in May, Herr von Flülen arrived with his daughter for their semi-annual visit of a week. Wolfgang's employer was well known to him, but the *gnadiges Fraulein* Gisela he beheld for the first time. She was a young woman of fine appearance, strong, well formed, of the florid German type, and dressed in a plain white gown, for the Flülens were not much richer, in point of ready money, than those who served them. She wore a straw hat with fluttering ribbon, and about her neck a bit of lace, which, with a quaint old ring, were her only ornaments. There was an imperious look in her hazel eyes, and when she spoke a savour of authority, as might befit one upon whom the glamour of Rabenstein had descended. To the dwarf she seemed a being from another sphere. He had read of such beautiful women—the Sirens of the Rhine, for example—but he supposed their species extinct; yet here stood one who surely must have come from that imagined land beyond the fabled Hesperus, where the love apples bloom. He understood Elaine now, and Guinevere, and the Lady of Shalott.

He saw her only for a moment the first day or two, being busy with his accounts of the vineyards, which the master examined, and then in taking note of many commands he was to have executed during the summer's leisure. In particular Herr von Flülen led him into the lower chamber of the donjon, which was kept locked, and wherein Judassohn had not presumed to enter until now. It was a large chamber, with great stone walls raised upon the solid rock. By the light of a candle the dwarf beheld upon one side a heavy wooden door, rudely painted over, and wrenched half from its hinges. This, explained his employer, had been supposed to lead to a treasure chamber. The French had torn it open only to uncover a solid stone wall many feet thick. The supposed treasure door led nowhere. By way of token of their wrath at this mischance, the conquerors had slit the throats of the prisoners spared in the flush of the first assault. After this explanation Herr von Flülen held the candle close to the dilapidated door, and bade the dwarf have it cleaned and replaced upon its hinges. "Unfortunately," he added, with a humorous glance upon his attendant, "my ancestor was not like the unprofitable steward of whom the Bible tells us that he buried his talent in the ground: I wish that a Rabenstein had imitated him, and that it might be my fate to dig it up again."

"In the Bible," timidly rejoined Wolfgang, "the man who dug up a buried talent was ill rewarded. Who knows, master, but that you are better off with your legendary talent, if ever it existed, still in the earth?"

The heir of the Rabensteins, standing with a flickering tallow dip in his hand, turned to look curiously at his ill-favoured servitor. The light cast a glow upon Judassohn's tawny hair and large ruddy face. "No wonder," thought Flülen, "they call this odd thing the *Red Dwarf*!"

"You mean," he said aloud, "that it may have been ill gotten, and, like a good German, you are superstitious enough to think that the wrong-doing—perhaps the blood—nay, even the curse of dying lips, clings to it. Bah! such flimsy fables do not fit these robust *fin-de siècle* days. Nevertheless we spend our time discussing it

"She looked at him attentively"

to little profit; and so for the honour of the castle you will have the door repaired, —and may the devil find the treasure and bring it me!"

On the following morning Wolfgang was busy in the garden, with a basket on his arm, gathering vegetables to garnish the *kalbscoteletten* that Mina would serve

for the master's dinner. Only a tiny area was allotted to the growth of sweet peas and red cabbages and parsley, with a fringe about them of pansies and mignonette; and so it happened that his quick ears caught the first step of Gisela's approach, and turning quickly, he beheld her standing in the gateway, with face uplifted and with arms bared to the elbow raised to the sprays of honeysuckle that hung from the arch above.

She came towards him, smiled, wished him good morning, and glanced at the contents of his basket, while he stood bareheaded before her. Then she raised her eyes and looked at him attentively, while her smile broadened to a rippling laugh. "That is why they call you the Red Dwarf," she exclaimed, nodding at his shaggy head of sandy hair; "and you make yourself useful here, it seems, and papa says you can paint, and that you will restore the picture on the treasure door yourself. And do you not find it lonesome, with no one to speak to but Mina and the cook?"

"No," answered Judassohn, simply; "so many voices speak from the stones of Rabenstein."

"Ah yes," the girl assented pleasantly. "Mina said something about your reading old books. You love Nature, and so do I. There was a garden party here last summer,—two hundred people,—it was divine, and somebody recited a beautiful poem about something. And you read poetry too, and you think the elves still haunt our German woods?"

"They would be sure to do so," replied the dwarf, with quivering lips, "if you walked through them"

"I!" echoed the girl, with a frank look of astonishment. "God forbid that I should tempt them! Do not you see that ring? Perhaps you know, for Mina may have told you, that I am engaged to be married—and any child understands that the nymphs, or whatever you call them, shun our nineteenth-century loves. Even Graf Aura said so when we walked over the Niederwald together as betrothed, though he explained to me that with an electric burner and two or three chemicals he could make a spectre cross our path. Do you believe it could be done? and if you met Morgan le Fay in one of those long winding wood paths yonder, would you think it was only oxygen and an incandescent flame?"

The dwarf listened in silence, and answered nothing. His thoughts instinctively reverted to the pierced heart of his confirmation class. Betrothed! and why should not she be betrothed, and walk the Niederwald with whom she pleased, and tell it him after as blithely as the Loreley sang to the drowning boatmen? He knew that what he felt was not love, for though men and women in love might die, the books agreed it was of joy; while he felt only the fire out of which love is born—and that is anguish beyond the sting of death.

"Yes," she continued, unheeding his silence, and replacing a stray lock of yellow hair that the wind blew in her eyes, "we are to be married some day, when the Count has a little money to live upon—if that time ever comes. I must go now: you have your work, and I have letters to write. Put a carrot in your basket; soup without a sliced carrot is no better than a song without words. And so good-bye, red dwarf"

The next day Judassohn was returning from an errand to a neighbouring village. The afternoon was warm, the slumbrous Rhineland lay steeped in golden sunshine, and, passing through one of the long walks in which Gisela had fancifully suggested his meeting with Morgan le Fay, he seated himself upon a gnarled tree-trunk to rest his small limbs. In every direction sloped vineyards, and above them stretched a scarified line of cliffs. Far away extended the glistening river, with an excursion steamboat belching forth a heavy cloud of smoke. He was astonished to see a little

barefoot girl approaching him through the vineyards, who, when she came to where he sat, paused and gravely wished him good evening. The dwarf observed her with attention, for her dress seemed different from the familiar peasant garb, and her keen grey eyes looked at him intently, as though with unutterable meaning.

"You are a stranger here, and have lost your way?" he queried.

The child burst into a peal of merry laughter at so absurd a thought, "Why," said she, "I have lived hereabouts all my life, and know the place far better than you!"

"And I suppose you know my name?"

"Mercy on us, yes: who knows not the Red Dwarf of Rabenstein?"

And through the breathless silence of the fading afternoon the little man seemed to hear deep down in his heart the mocking peal of the world's laughter—"the Dwarf! the Red Dwarf of Rabenstein!"

"Since you have stopped to speak," he resumed petulantly, "doubtless you have something to say?"

"I met a beautiful young lady at the castle; she bade me come hither to meet you and whisper I am Morgan le Fay."

It was the Dwarf's turn to laugh. "A pretty conceit!" he chuckled; "and perhaps she taught you your part, and how to prate of bygone days?"

"I do not need to be taught," replied the child, with roguish mystification. "I know those days better than she."

Wolfgang observed his droll visitor abstractedly. An odd fancy had come to him—a mystical thought resembling the weird phantasies wherein his favourite Heine abounded—of a sprite like this returning from the old romantic times to the prosaic present, young and fair and spiritual as ever. "And if it be true," he mused, "that a genius unseen, yet not unheard, may speak to the individual intelligence of the past of a lifetime—might not some occult presence murmur of the idyllic meaning of half forgotten centuries?"

"Do not forget me!" cried the child, breaking in upon his reverie; "remember I am Morgan le Fay."

But Judassohn's attention had become fixed upon another figure, that, in the guise of a decrepit old woman bearing a burden of dry sticks, came laboriously up the path from the lower vineyards. She fastened her hollow eyes upon him, and leaning upon a staff, repeated querulously, "Morgan le Fay! Who says that I am Morgan le Fay?"

She had caught the last words spoken, and had taken them to herself. The dwarf turned to look for the child, but she was nowhere to be seen. The straight paths, the vineyards, the sloping hillsides were all spread before him, but Morgan le Fay had vanished. He turned abruptly back upon the woman. Could it be that these two odd beings, the elfish child and the withered beldame, were one and the same! Had the child, with her strange prattle, appeared only to his mental vision as a semblance of the poetic past, and was the crone now before him, with her faggot of sticks, but a type of the dusty and haggard present? But the new-comer left him little time for such idle speculation. She raised her bony hand, and, pointing to the castle with a strange gesture, as though indicating some legendary region beyond the visible horizon, exclaimed,—

"It is there! There, deep in its heart, lies the Rheingold you all prate about. Shall the old revert to the scenes of their infancy, and I not know what happened?"

Without another word she moved by him, and, resuming her way, plodded slowly along the ascending path through the drowse of the twilight, until, at the crest of the hillside, her bent figure passed from view.

That night, as Judassohn composed himself to sleep, he felt like one who has

been walking among such pageants as fill the Arabian Nights Through his shutterless window he could see the stars, which reminded him of Gisela, and he wondered whether she, too, ever gazed wistfully upon them, or whether, in this busy, hurrying, nineteenth-century life, she had no time to bestow upon anything so far from earth Across his dreams floated genii, that changed from youth to age, whispering of treasure caves, and telling strange legends of the love of dwarfs for the radiant daughters of the King.

Not many days later Herr von Flulen and Gisela left Rabenstein for their home in Coblentz. Wolfgang had seen her frequently since their meeting in the garden, and usually she had stopped to speak a kindly word. Had it not been for an animating purpose which had suddenly sprung up within him, the prospect of this departure would have overspread poor Judassohn's little sphere with gloom. The entire garrison turned out to salute the master and his daughter. Half-way down the hill went a porter with their portmanteaux on his shoulder. Mina and the cook stood curtseying near the gate, and the dwarf waited alone, hat in hand. He was heavy-hearted enough; nor was he made happier by the sight of the posy of flowers the goddess had plucked, for he divined for whom they were destined. Yet he mastered himself, and smiled at destiny as many a greater philosopher has done Perhaps Gisela read something in his wistful eyes as she paused to bid him good-bye.

"Some day, in the autumn, we shall come again," she said; "and you will he glad to see us, for you are glad to have seen me now"

"It has been the event of a lifetime," murmured the dwarf, aghast at his own hardihood, and bowing his head.

Herr von Flulen, standing near, caught the words and smiled. "Who should say, after that," he murmured to himself, "that politeness is wholly lost?"

But when they were gone and Wolfgang had seen the last of Gisela's white gown and fluttering ribbons far down the hill side, he went to the treasure chamber, locked himself in, and lighted a lamp which cast a clear, ruddy glow upon the walls. Here was the purpose that he was resolved to live—or die—for He felt, as by an unerring intuition, that failure to recover the legendary Rabenstein treasure would break his heart, and he approached his task with extreme deliberation. His chess studies had taught him that but few things in this world cannot be accomplished if the right means are employed. He had already mapped out the elements of his undertaking, much as he dissected the features of a chess problem. The treasure must either be underground or in some secret recess within the walls He divided the area in and out of the castle into sections, into each of which he would dig—commencing, however, with the easiest part of his work and dealing first with every square foot of the building. He had prepared a list of every room, closet, and passage, and had marked against each the distinct parts of the search to be made Floors were to be taken up piecemeal and relaid. Lintels of doors and casements of windows were to be removed and panelling displaced. He would climb each chimney and scrutinise the interior stonework. The walls would be scraped and measurements made to discover if their inner and outer surfaces and thicknesses corresponded. The last place to be searched would be the well, which must be emptied, after which he would descend it. For this assistance would be needed, and he had mentally selected the son of a neighbouring vine-grower to help in the more difficult part of his labour. The work began, and ten days were spent in general preliminary investigations. No beaver ever delved more indefatigably, but the only definite result was to demonstrate the immensity of the task he had set himself. The effect of this disturbance of the calm to which the two serving-women were habituated may be imagined. Unable to pursue his work without their knowledge, and often without their wondering gaze,

he thought to keep them quiet by enlisting their co-operation. To their frequent remonstrances against possible injury to the property, the dwarf invariably quoted the substance of Herr von Flülen's words: "I wish that some ancestor of mine had buried a talent in the ground, and that it might be my luck to dig it up again!" So day after day, from sunrise to sunset, the dwarf tapped the walls in search of hollow spaces, and tested the mortar, and clambered up and down a ladder, scanning every inch from floor to ceiling, and taking out a plank or a panel here and there. Near by stood Mina and her companion, anxiously observing these singular proceedings, and wondering if the dwarf, with his grimaces and mutterings, and his monkey-like scramblings up and down, were not a madman, to whom their master had unwittingly entrusted his estate.

When this quest had gone on for a fortnight, without other result than to cover the rooms in which it was conducted with dust and to deface the woodwork everywhere, Wolfgang suspended his operations and devoted an entire day to the analysis of his problem. On rising from his couch he vowed neither to eat nor drink that day until a clue to the mystery was discovered. At noon, the compassionate Mina, making her way up the winding stair to his room with a plate of food, was met and nearly overturned by the dwarf rushing headlong down.

"*Gott steh mir bei!*" ejaculated the woman, as the platter fell in fragments at her feet, "the poor creature is raving, and this very day will I write to the master." Wolfgang heeded not, but rushed in all haste to the treasure chamber, lighting his lamp as before. It had suddenly flashed upon him that the clue was to be sought somewhere about the wooden door which the French had loosened from its hinges. The inquiry had suggested itself, "Why should the occupants of the castle place a door over a solid wall?" Tradition named that particular spot the treasure chamber. But why was an *empty* treasure chamber secured by an outside iron gate, whereof the trace still remained, and which, doubtless, the French had wrenched away altogether? He seized the wooden door before which he and Herr von Flülen had stood, and easily removing it altogether from its hinges, dragged it into the sunlight. The first glance showed that the painting upon its surface, which he had been ordered to have restored, was of the crudest kind. How odd that a common door in a dark cell—a door that led nowhere—should be painted at all! He examined its surface minutely, and was electrified, upon scratching away a little of the colour, to discover that one painting had been superposed upon another. Beneath this crude delineation of figures was another subject; and here—the dwarf's whole being thrilled as he uttered the fateful words—here was the key to the secret! To work he went with lye, rubbing softly and evenly, and gradually bringing away the superficial paint and exposing a subject executed long before, and by a more practised hand. Wolfgang's heart leaped when he recognised that it was an inscription, written in an ancient and barbarous German dialect, which, presumably, was the vernacular of the lordly Rabensteins, and which he deciphered with difficulty. The sense of its few words seemed to be this:—

"He who would enter
Must pass where is no door"

Here then, at last, was a direct message, clearly relating to the treasure, and intended to convey, in this evasive form, an indication as to how that treasure might be reached. Why had it been daubed over with uncouth figures? Perhaps at the time of the siege, when the fate of the castle seemed desperate, this device was imagined to veil the significant words from the assailants, should resistance be over-powered. Why had not the door been destroyed—split in pieces and tossed upon

the nearest fire? Possibly because the Rabensteins wished to leave it for the future information of their successors, whoever these might be. And where is it, then, that there obviously is no door? Ha, ha!—the dwarf laughed long and loud as this query presented itself, till the frightened maids listened to him aghast from round the corner. "Where there is no door is in the solid rock of the stone floor, you gaping fool!" he cried to himself, slapping his leg in uproarious merriment. But the afternoon was far spent; he was exhausted by want of food and nervous excitement; he would eat, drink and sleep now, and to-morrow it should go hard but he would make his way into the bowels of the earth. So he rewarded himself with an extravagant feast—a sausage wrapped in stewed cabbage leaves, plenty of brown bread and cheese, and a deep, delicious draught of beer; then he lay down upon his bed, dressed as he was, and slept for ten hours.

The next morning, at break of day, he was at work with hammer and chisel, and two lamps to light him, splitting away fragments of the floor, the central portion whereof was immediately revealed to be not solid rock, but, beneath the mould of years, a layer of stones mortared together. The morning passed in this vigorous chipping and tearing out of stones, which he tossed together into a corner.

* * * * *

"Ach! Heaven be praised!" sobbed Mina, with tears in her honest eyes, as at twelve o'clock Herr von Flulen and his daughter made their appearance, in answer to the alarming summons she had despatched the previous day, bringing with them a lusty fellow with a heavy stick in case this crazy dwarf proved unmanageable. "He is mad!" she cried, "stark mad; all this blessed day he has been locked in the treasure tower breaking stones. Get rid of the mischievous wretch, I implore you, master, or he will bring the whole castle down about our ears."

A noisy summons at the locked door received no response. They listened. All was still, and through the seams they could distinguish that the room was brightly lighted.

"What can the rogue be about?" ejaculated Herr von Flulen, motioning his man forward. A vigorous effort, and the locked door yielded. A strange spectacle met the view of Herr von Flülen, Gisela, the strong fellow and the frightened maids as they peeped in. At the centre of the floor was an irregular opening, and in one corner a great heap of stones. Wolfgang was nowhere in sight, but as they looked he suddenly emerged, like a Jack-in-the-box, from the aperture, his face covered with beads of moisture and flushed with tremendous excitement. For surprisers and surprised alike it was a case of mutual astonishment, but the dwarf was the first to recover himself.

"Rheingold!" he screamed, with arms frantically outstretched: "it is the fabled Rheingold; it is all here—the old witch spoke truth—and only to think that the feet of the French must have trampled the dust above it for hours!"

Great heaps of money amid shreds of leather purses, a chest of silver coin, jewelled crucifixes, women's bracelets, gems plucked from their settings, gold chains and fillets, chalices, a score of diamonds: what industrious tax-gatherers must the ancient Rabensteins have been, and how large and varied a *clientèle* contributed to their hoard!

Herr von Flulen proved himself more thrifty than the unprofitable steward of Biblical fame, and made good use of the talent his ancestors had buried in the ground. As the summer went by the castle was restored, a handsome dower settled upon Gisela, a liberal largess distributed among the poor, and the proceeds of the rest invested in American railways. The treasure chamber was converted into a wine cellar, and filled with a couple of thousand bottles of choice vintages. For all his German sentiment Herr von Flulen was a practical man, and had been heard to affirm

"'Rheingold! It is the fabled Rheingold!'"

that there are few things more musical in one of Wagner's operas than the drawing of a cork. The dwarf received a purse of gold, his salary was doubled, he was named seneschal of Rahenstein for life, and the radiant Gisela, in a moment of impulsive gratitude, gave him her hand to kiss. As Mina remarked, he had nothing now to do but eat, drink, and be merry.

He had, indeed, much to make him happy, for had not he conferred the greatest possible benefit upon the woman he adored with a distant and hopeless passion!

There were preparations, too, for Gisela's wedding, which filled every heart with joy, and made Judassohn grow thin and wan for very gladness.

In the blithe springtime following, at the season of roses, when the sunny woods were haunted with the poesy of legendary figures, Gisela and her husband came with a couple of attendants to Rabenstein for the honeymoon. There was no fluttering of banners to honour their arrival, but Mina handed Count Aura a telegram, which he hastily opened and waved above his head like the white plume of Navarre.

"*Hoch viva!*" he cried aloud: "the American shares have risen 10 per cent."

"And where," asked Gisela, glancing about, "is Judassohn?"

Mina and the others could not tell. He had gathered together all his belongings two days before, had shaken the maids very sadly by the hand for good-bye, and had gone on board a steamboat at Coblentz and sailed away down the Rhine, the saints only knew whither.

But, as she listened, Gisela's glance fell on a corner of the courtyard just beneath her window, where a great bunch of tiny flowers—the German *vergissmeinicht*—was growing where flowers had never bloomed before. At the sight her eyes filled with tears, for she understood the passion which the dwarf's great heart had carried in silence, and knew that the forget-me-nots breathed its humble and mute farewell.

WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.

MONSIEUR DE NÉRON.

PARIS, *October 25th*, 1894.

I WAS born at St. Germain in the year 1830, and therefore, even if you know no more of figures than a *Ministre des Finances* you will see that I am sixty-four years old. I am not an infirm man, though I no longer eat champagne suppers nor frequent public balls. The trifle of interest upon my savings, added to my pension—a mere pittance, such as one might expect from these Radical times—enables me to live without care, and to allow myself a few gratifications. I drink coffee in bed every morning, as becomes an officer of the Second Empire, rise at twelve, and dine upon *la soupe* of the French soldier, followed by a Chateaubriand, or a grilled chicken, *arrosé* with a bottle of Léoville—good enough stuff to lubricate the whistle, as the frank-spoken English sailors say.

It was one afternoon, a week ago, when I had just finished dinner, that the Commissaire de Police of this Arrondissement waited upon me. I was pouring out a thimbleful of brandy and deliberating whether to go to the *matinée*, when the

Commissaire followed Babette into my sitting-room unannounced. His muddy boots left a mark upon my ruby carpet, and he looked at me inquiringly, as though I were some curious and perhaps dangerous animal. I regretfully remembered another saying that comes to us from across the Channel, that an Englishman's house is his castle, and wondered how John Bull will relish a hangtail republic like ours when he looks up across his roast beef and pint-o'-bitter-draw-it-mild to see an inspector walk into his private room, while a couple of bobbies stand staring at the door.

The Commissaire's first words informed me that a dangerous character—he used the words with startling intensity—had fallen into the hands of the police, and that a paper found in his possession made allusion to me; that I must come instantly to the Préfecture, not precisely under arrest, but for the purpose of identifying the prisoner.

"Who is this prisoner?" I ejaculated.

"He passes under so many aliases that it is hard to tell his real name."

"But it is monstrous to connect me with the criminals you find in the byways!"

"*Après tout*," rejoined the Commissaire, with an elastic shrug, "if Monsieur is clear of complicity, as of course he must be," he added, with a queer smile, "it will only be to inform us who this man is."

"You attach great importance to him, then?"

The Commissaire drew in his breath with a hissing sound without speaking.

"So bad as that! . . . An Anarchist, perhaps?"

"*Bédam!*" was all the answer I received.

At the Préfecture de Police I was shown into the Préfet's private room. There were so many people crowded about the table at which he sat, that for a moment I did not distinguish which among them was the prisoner. Then two or three men moved aside, and I saw him standing handcuffed, with a *sergeant de ville* on each side. I recognised him at once as Monsieur de Néron, a man I had met at several periods of my life. His appearance was greatly changed since I first knew him, at Rome in the early sixties. He still had the burly, athletic figure of his younger days, and the smiling look of insolent triumph; but he had grown fat and bald, his eye had lost much of its fire, and his face had acquired that indescribable yet unmistakable look that stamps the absinthe drinker. No salutation or word of recognition was exchanged. Perhaps he was thinking, as I was, of what happened between us in '71, whereof I shall presently have occasion to speak.

The Préfet asked me questions till I nearly fainted from exhaustion. After that a *Juge d'Instruction* cross-questioned me in a way which showed that the prisoner was believed to be the supreme chief of the Anarchists in France, Spain, and Italy—a sort of ultimate "Number One," who makes the plans and touches the button, and, pouf!—a revolution. The straightforwardness of my story soon exculpated me from any connection with him—a circumstance doubtless greatly strengthened by the failure to discover anything more suspicious among my papers than some photographs of handsome women and half a dozen love letters dating from no matter how many bright years ago. Through the long course of my interrogatory, the prisoner never proffered a word, nor made the slightest interruption, merely regarding me from time to time with his insouciant, devil-may-care look. Whatever reasons his captors had for thinking him guilty of great crimes, he appeared to feel quite unconcerned, perhaps knowing that the fetters of justice have no more power to bind a malefactor of extraordinary force—a real *premier* in crime—than the webs spun by spiders at dawn can stop a wolf on his way to his lair. *Qui sait!* All I know is that upon presenting myself the next morning I was excused from further attendance, and soon it leaked out that Monsieur de Néron had mysteriously

vanished in the night, leaving nothing behind but half a package of cigarettes. Impossible, you will say; yet we all know that things deemed impossible are continually happening. There was an *enquête* into the circumstances of his escape, and the guards who connived at it were severely punished, but that did not bring back the culprit. In the meantime my interrogatory was read over to me—a jumbled, unintelligible mass of questions and answers—and I was required to sign it as an acknowledgment of its accuracy. Before leaving the room a heedless impulse prompted me to offer to write the story of my acquaintance with Monsieur de Néron in more concise and direct form; whereat the Préfet bowed, as polite as a dancing-master, and the *huissier* showed me out. The next day, after dinner, Babette wheeled a large table to the light, laid upon it half a dozen sheets of foolscap and two artistically sharpened pencils, and I wrote the following memorandum:

I first met Monsieur de Néron at Rome in 1861. It was when the Emperor Napoleon had purchased the ruined Palace of the Cæsars of Pope Pius IX., and had commissioned the celebrated archæologist Pietro Rosa to excavate it. Those were the glorious days of old Rome, before it had been smeared with modern brick and stucco. True, one might come now and then upon a heap of offal higher than a man's head, and occasionally a throat was cut at midnight, but as the charming Romans said, *Cosa vuole!*—will not God care for His own at the last?

An uncle of mine had caused me to receive a military education; but upon his death, in 1852, I relinquished my chance of a commission, and devoted myself to a more congenial and lucrative career than the profession of arms. After some years of travel and study, I obtained a clerical appointment in connection with the researches being made by the Imperial Government amid the ruins of the Palatine Hill. One morning I was superintending the labours of a force of men, with my maps unrolled at my feet. The scene was one of such transcendent loveliness, with the violet Alban hills and the vast stretch of the green Campagna in the distance, that occasionally I strolled this way or that, to look about me and to breathe the soft Roman air, and revel in the deliciousness of the Italian sunshine. During one of these momentary absences, I observed a stranger, a young man, clean shaven, of powerful physique and commanding air, walking about contemplating the fragments that raised themselves in places above the greensward. I took him to be some visitor of distinction to whom a permit had been extended, and thinking it a pity that he should waste his time in mere idle speculation, approached him, with the remark, "If you desire a guide, Monsieur, I will detail some one to accompany you!"

Before my sentence was finished, the stranger, who had turned to confront me, burst into an immodemte fit of laughter. I felt so mortified at this rudeness that I was moving away, when, laying his hand upon my arm, and restraining his merriment, he said:

"You will perhaps excuse the mirth your question excites in me when I give you some slight proof of how little I, of all others, stand in need of a guide in the Palace of the Cæsars. Listen. You and your men are at this moment, so one of them told me, in search of a portico or side entrance to the structure raised by Caligula. You are searching for it in the wrong place: it is farther back, and a hundred yards to the left!"

I was as much displeased by this suggestion as I had been at his want of civility when I oddressed him. Was it not absurd, as well as impertinent, that a casual visitor should assume to know better than Signor Rosa, under whose orders I was working?

"Nevertheless," I replied, "I am not informed upon what authority you speak, and, as for the position of the portico, it must evidently have opened upon the Via Sacra"

"You are again mistaken," answered the stranger. "The Via Sacra did not pass,

as you imagine, in a straight line before the Palace. When you dig it out, you will find that it bends away to the eastward."

I looked at the man in silence. Was he mad—this babbler who knew the course of the Via Sacra, that had lain buried for centuries, and whose position the best of us could only conjecture?

"There is another mistake upon your map which lies unrolled yonder," he added, talking as though he owned the ground we stood upon. "The temple of Jupiter was built, not where you place it, but near those great trees, at the head of a little street called, in ancient times, the Clivus Palatinus." With that he gave me a nod, and, turning away, continued his stroll.

You may be sure I did not let the matter end there. A moment later my clerk was following him from a distance, and that afternoon he reported the stranger to be *il cavaliere di Nerone*, lodging in the Via Quattro Fontane.

His words were strange enough, and left me dazed, but, stranger still, the statements he made proved true. I remained several years in Rome, working as one of Signor Rosa's assistants. The portico was found at the spot indicated; the Via Sacra turned eastward, as he said; the Temple of Jupiter Stator, and even the Clivus Palatinus, revealed themselves at the point he had noted. And here I must plead guilty to having taken to myself the credit of these discoveries as the result of my own superior acumen. As soon as it appeared that the stranger was right about the portico, I announced the other facts he had communicated to me, and upon my prognostications proving correct, I became famous among antiquarians.

It goes without saying that I made inquiries concerning the Cavahere di Nerone, which resulted in information of a nature to his discredit. Whence he came, no one knew. He had received an excellent education, and spoke French with such correctness as indicated a long residence in Paris. He was said to be indolent and gluttonous. He talked with gusto of Spanish bull-fights in which he had participated, and was known to the police for monstrous and demoniacal cruelty to animals, and, when they fell into his power, to young children. He possessed ability of a high order, frequented the Papal Court, always had plenty of money, and was evidently "protected," as the Romans call it, by the highest influence. He was fond of strolling about the ruins, knowing many of them, as it were, by intuition, and speaking of a few as recalling personal memories. Some of his time must, however, have been less innocently employed, for, although but twenty-three years old, he had already incurred the scandal of having compromised and abandoned two young women.

My phenomenal success with the buried Via Sacra and the Temple of Jupiter Stator ultimately brought me to the notice of the Emperor Napoleon. I was appointed one of his staff of literary secretaries, being employed in 1866 upon technical and geographical data for his "Vie de Jules César," and in 1867 upon confidential matters. I do not mean to insinuate that I was more favoured or trusted than others who were engaged in similar capacities, but I was industrious, I acquired the knack of quickly deciphering the Emperor's chirography, and away from my desk, or from the presence of my Imperial master, I forgot everything of a private nature that came under my notice.

In the summer of 1867 I was ordered to Compiègne, to take my turn for a fortnight as one of his Majesty's scribes. That year, as every one knows, was the climax of the Second Empire. The Exhibition was open, and the Czar, the King of Prussia, the Sultan, and the Emperor of Austria visited Paris. All the luxury and magnificence in which the pride of life and the lust of the flesh can steep themselves were there. To this day, when I listen to the love music of Strauss, whose waltzes were familiar novelties, I seem to behold again a semblance of that voluptuous dream.

"He was fond of strolling about the ruins."

But to the Emperor —ill, harassed, haunted by forebodings—that year's cup was bitter. I had first seen him in 1857, when he was *par excellence* the man of nerve. Through almost daily contact I came to know him as the nerveless man. Ten years before, he strode upon the lines of a fixed purpose, now every step pointed towards a collapse.

On the day of my arrival at Compiègne I was surprised to see the Cavaliere di Nerone sitting after dinner upon a terrace in the midst of a brilliant group of men and women. I say surprised only in the sense that I had not expected to meet him, for Compiègne was the place to which all sorts of adventurers obtained access. The next day I heard that his name was now gallicised into "Monsieur de Néron," that he was still under the highest protection of the Pontifical Government, that he was the inventor of a fulminating powder of extraordinary destructiveness, with which some officers

of the Bureau de l'Artillerie were experimenting. In appearance he was unchanged. There were the same athletic and burly proportions, the same thick-set neck and clean-shaven face, the same sensuous yet commanding eyes. My informant whispered further that he had left Rome two years previously on account of a defalcation in the Pontifical treasury in which he appeared to be implicated, and also that his name was connected at Compiègne with that of Mademoiselle X——, one of the beautiful girls with whom, as maids of honour, the Empress surrounded herself. Socially he was a favourite—as is often the case when a man has a scandal jingling at his heels: it is like tying a tin pan to a dog's tail—all the other dogs run after him.

One afternoon, some days later, my work being finished, and the Emperor having left the château for a drive, so that there was no chance of my services being required, I resolved to refresh myself by a walk through the forest. I had gone some distance when, on approaching a clearing, I heard excited voices. One was the voice of a woman, pleading in words that did not reach me; the other was that of a man—harsh, strident, producing a sound that I had never before heard the equal of. A few steps brought me to the edge of the trees, and there I halted. Thirty paces distant stood Mademoiselle X——, confronted by Monsieur de Néron. She had ceased to speak; her face was bathed in tears, and her hands were extended in mute supplication. And he! What a figure he was—dressed to perfection, twisting his *gants de suède* convulsively between his fingers, with red passionate face and livid eyes, and nostrils distended like an animal's! During the instant I stood there he poured forth his words with frenzied volubility, and —think of it—this angry raving of his was *in Latin*! Then suddenly he advanced and struck the lady a heavy slap in the face.

I sprang to the rescue, but halted at the first step. De Néron had turned upon his heel, and was striding away. Mademoiselle X—— was walking slowly towards me, with her face bent down and half-covered by a handkerchief she held to it. For the lady's sake I would have interposed a moment before; but now, for the sake of the lady's *amour propre*, I drew back unnoticed, watching to see that she was not followed or further molested. She walked away sobbing, passing within a few yards of me, and disappeared among the trees.

I paused for some minutes, rooted to the spot where I had innocently trespassed upon a drama of grave import to at least one life. What may have been the story between these two I know not, nor at that moment did I concern myself with it. The perplexity that beset me was the fact that De Néron spoke to Mademoiselle X—— in Latin. Now, a man in a paroxysm of rage may curse and rant in the language most familiar to him, even though it be unknown to the person to whom the words are addressed. It is Nature's instinctive reversion to the mother tongue. But how could Latin be De Néron's mother tongue? Of course I shall be told that what he used was Italian, but this was not the fact. I speak Italian fluently, and am too good a Latin scholar to be mistaken. Moreover, it was Latin spoken as neither I nor any other living man had ever heard it used, with a rhythm of enunciation and a redundance of invective wholly different from the stilted aping of a dead language. Could it be that Monsieur de Néron spoke Latin in that paroxysmal frenzy because to him it was a living language, expressing things no modern and acquired tongue could phrase with equal force and fluency?

In the midst of these cogitations I noticed something lying upon the grass where they had stood, and found it to be one of De Néron's gloves. After breakfast on the morrow I led him aside. He remembered me at once, though I do not know whether he had previously noticed me during the week I had been at Compiègne.

"He advanced and struck the lady."

"We met once in Rome," I began, "some years ago, among the ruins of the Palatine, with whose former construction you showed a miraculous knowledge."

He smiled absently, nodded, and waited for me to continue.

"Chance brought me yesterday in sight of a painful scene a mile from here. I was stupefied to see a man strike a lady."

He turned upon me his large face, beneath whose olive skin the hot blood flushed. Even in that moment's excitement I could not but admire the classic contour of his features, and thought him, as perhaps Mademoiselle X—— had thought him before me, as handsome as the sun-god whom Clytie loved.

Without another word I extended his glove, but he brushed it impatiently aside.

"Monsieur," said he, "you can carry my glove back to the place where you found it. You were pained, you say, to see me yesterday at a moment upon which another would have forborne to intrude. I remember you only too well during the

Roman days to which you refer. I rendered you then a trifling service, which you acknowledged by having me dogged to my lodgings, and by causing offensive and injurious inquiries to be circulated about me. Shall I tell you in a word what I think of your conduct?"

"Do me the favour," I exclaimed, "to say that word in Latin, since that is the tongue in which, to judge from your performance yesterday, you express yourself with the greatest readiness."

He winced at this thrust, and I saw a dangerous look leap to his eyes.

"Monsieur," he exclaimed hotly, "since you presume to allude again to what happened yesterday, you will be good enough to meet me to-morrow at sunrise at that identical spot, with your seconds, when we shall finish this discussion with very few words in any language."

On the following morning the sun had not yet reached the horizon when, at a little before seven o'clock, I and my seconds, who were officers of my acquaintance, arrived upon the now familiar ground. It was a fine, crisp, October day, the air quite still, and the motionless branches of red and gold contrasting vividly with the brilliant emerald of the grass. I was a capital swordsman in those days, having been a fencer all my life, and having previously had two affairs upon the terrain, of which modesty forbids me to speak further than to say that one turned upon the question whether macaroni should or should not be flavoured with cheese, and that the other concerned a lady's photograph which my opponent had abstracted (by mistake, of course) from her album. I therefore felt quite unconcerned, and walked briskly up and down, humming a refrain from *La Belle Hélène*, while my seconds chatted softly and puffed at their cigars. When twenty minutes had elapsed, one of them approached me ceremoniously, as one soldier approaches another who is about to risk his life.

"I have the deep regret, mon cher," he began, "to inform you, with the concurrence of my colleague, that in our opinion it is evident that the Sieur de Néron will not come to this rendezvous. This evasion of his is identical with what he did last year, when he failed to meet Madame Mathilde's husband."

Almost before the speaker had finished a martial figure appeared and saluted us all with a comprehensive wave of the hand, in which he held an open letter. This gentleman was Colonel B——, one of Monsieur de Néron's seconds, and the letter was written by the Cavalière himself at midnight, informing the Colonel that, upon reflection, it appeared beneath his dignity to cross swords with one whom he was pleased to term "an employé," and that he was on the point of leaving for Paris. "A greater piece of poltroonery never came to my knowledge," added the Colonel, "and I trust, gentlemen, that you will do me and my colleague the justice to exonerate us from all responsibility."

Two years and nine months later, at the beginning of August 1870, the First French Army Corps occupied the line of the Lauter; and here I, serving as one of General Douay's volunteer aides, was in camp. The army was short of officers, as of everything else, and a graduate of St. Cyr would at least do to stop a Prussian bullet. I was sitting on the grass trying to repair my garments, and thinking to myself that, from all the disheartening news that circulated, the bottom was equally out of our march to Berlin. Suddenly a figure passed before me: it was De Néron, in uniform, covered with decorations, and no more disconcerted at the sight of me than if we had never laid eyes upon one another. I rose at once, and walked straight upon him.

"Monsieur," I exclaimed, "when one is a coward, one does not presume to stand in the ranks of brave men who are about to give their blood for their country."

He regarded me fixedly, with magnificent indifference, breathing short a little from corpulency, which had gained upon him since our rencounter at Compiègne. He wore an artillery uniform, from which I inferred that his fulminating powder might have secured him a commission. He looked the very type of a fighting man—cool, resolute, imperturbable—yet I alone in all that camp knew him to be an arrant poltroon.

"Monsieur," he replied without hesitation, "I did not come here to bandy words or cross weapons with my brother officers. Within a few days—perhaps a few hours—we are to encounter a host of enemies. Will not that suffice your ardour? And when that moment comes," he pursued, laying his hand theatrically upon his breast, "I will vie with you, as becomes a *preux chevalier*, in deeds of proweas; and when the victory is ours, if ours it is to be, I will, if you still require it, meet you when and where you please."

"That," I exclaimed, slapping my leg contemptuously, "is what you said a couple of years ago, just before business called you in such haste from Compiègne."

"Well," he answered quietly, as though my taunt had passed him by, "if we must fight, so shall it be. Curb your impatience for a day or two, and on the first battlefield we will shoot one another, *à l'Américaine*, on sight."

De Néron was not wrong in anticipating a surfeit of fighting. Two days later, August 6th, those of us who held the village of Froeschewiller were violently attacked. I pass by the courage, the carnage, the horror, the despair of that evil day. As I stood watching the wild gallop of the cuirassiers to their destruction, I was wounded and my horse killed by the bursting of a shell. On our side it had already become a *sauvè qui peut*, and I made my way painfully to the rear, whither thousands were straggling. Presently an officer rode past me covered with dust, and grasping a broken sword: in leaping a hedge his horse fell and threw him heavily. A moment later, passing where he lay, I recognised de Néron. Much as I disliked the man, the chivalry of a French officer bade me pause beside my intended adversary, even in the midst of that awful *débacle*, and offer him such assistance as one disabled man can give another. He grasped eagerly the proffered canteen, and, having slaked his thirst, thanked me and rose with difficulty to his feet.

"It is nothing," he said, as we walked away together. Then, as though speaking to himself, he added, "The amphitheatre never beheld a finer slaughter than the mangling and crippling and killing of those cuirassiers. By all the gods, what a sight!"

The retreat to Châlons was an arduous five days' journey, which de Néron and I made in company with a convoy of wounded. We no longer talked of fighting: there was sure to be enough of that without duels. Moreover, the extraordinary mystery which hung about this singular man exercised a witchery over me that nothing could shake off. I am no more inquisitive than most people, yet I would have given half a year's income to know the Cavaliere's true story. Events proved that I had not long to wait.

On the 12th of August we sat down to dine together *tête à tête* in a restaurant at Châlons. It was to be our last meeting, and we had agreed to part friends. On the morrow I, with my arm in a sling, was to return to Paris for a fortnight in the hospital, while he, having recovered from his concussion, should resume his service with Ducrot's Army Corps. We were finishing a bottle of champagne at the end of dinner, by way of refreshing our lips after the two bottles of Chambertin which had flavoured our repast. For three weeks we had been living upon coarse camp fare, glad during the retreat to get a single meal a day. The wine, the rest, and

our table-talk together had brought us to a stage of good-natured comradeship on the strength of which I ventured to inquire the fate of his fulminating powder.

"It is the greatest military invention of the age," he replied, coolly wiping his lips; "and, had the army been supplied with my long-barrelled magazine cannon, and my annihilating shells, the Prussians could not have lived within seven miles of our line of battle. *Que voulez vous?* the models are somewhere in the Ordnance Department, and could we have hastened them by—say a few years, an equipment of artillery would have been furnished to the Armée du Rhin, compared to which the Prussian batteries and your rumbling mitrailleuses are but coffee-mills."

"And yet you are not a professional artillerist?"

"No; I pursue it as a profession of love."

"A singular taste for a dilettante!"

"You might not think it so if you knew who and what I am."

"Can you not see," I ejaculated impatiently, "that I am dying to know who and what you are? You are the most weird enigma ever heard of. You know things that have been forgotten for centuries, and my flesh creeps when I clasp your hand in mine, as though it were a hand that had plucked flowers and filled wine-cups ages ago

Monsieur de Néron listened to these extravagant words without emotion. "I cannot tell you my story," he answered, after a moment's hesitation: "it is incredible, and you would no more believe it than a dozen others to whom it has been told."

"As surely," I rejoined, "as the facts you told me about the position of the buried ruins on the Palatine proved true, will I believe any confidence about yourself."

At these words Monsieur de Néron rose, paid for our dinner, and motioned me to follow. "I cannot talk," he explained, "when there is any risk of being overheard. It is a fine starlight night, the streets are tolerably quiet,—walk with me half an hour, and I will recount to you a stranger story than is to be found in most fiction.

"Do you ever," he asked, passing his arm familiarly through mine, "experience a sudden spasmodic consciousness that the thing you are doing, or the words you are speaking, or the thought you are thinking, have been done or spoken or thought by you in some dim, bygone epoch? Of course you do. It is a sensation experienced by almost every one, and from it was derived our first perception of the possible transmigration of souls. With me that consciousness was habitual from childhood. As soon as I began to think, I perceived that I possessed two memories, and that one of them was a recollection of things that happened to me at some remote date, amid other scenes, and in the companionship of people I no longer met. When I was fourteen, I talked about this dual memory to a priest who came once a week to Rocca di Papa, where my mother lived; and he first laughed at my queer fancy, and presently became afraid of me. The next year I was put to school at a Jesuit seminary, and ventured, after a time, to make the same confidence to my tutor. He did not laugh, for Jesuits know that the truth, however grotesque, is never ridiculous; and, so far from being disconcerted, he gave me excellent advice. 'You evidently believe,' he said, 'that somewhere, at some time long since past, you lived upon earth, and that the memory of that life haunts and follows and perplexes you now. Through the life you are living to-day appears to you to be woven the tissue of a life you know only in memory, but that you remember with perfect distinctness. My advice to you is to read, to study, to fill your mind with pictures of bygone times, and the semblance of many lands, and the names of a thousand illustrious men. Probe the past in every direction. If your theory is right, you should some day come upon a clue to this extraordinary dreamland. If there be nothing in it, the course of study I recommend will have made you no mean scholar.'

"I took him at his word, and a month later sought him again with an open book in my hand. 'Lucius Annæus Seneca,' I explained, pointing to the title-page, 'was the name of my tutor.' 'And who then the devil are *you*?' shouted the Jesuit, growing red in the face. 'I have found my own name also,' I replied triumphantly, 'and here it is:—

"'NERO CLAUDIUS CÆSAR DRUSUS GERMANICUS.'

"The Jesuits would have no more to do with me, but I was provided for at the Collegio Romano by an all-powerful influence that has continually made itself felt. I acquired Latin by intuition, and gave my tutors the music of half a dozen of the love songs Acte used to sing, which they developed into superb anthems. At the age of sixteen I wrote my dream-life from memory, and submitted it in the form of a prize essay, embracing newly discovered and authentic facts concerning the emperor Nero and his times. It made a profound sensation. Some of the Cardinals thought to test me. 'If,' they said, 'this be indeed a case of direct transmigration, you will be able to take us to the spot on the Campagna where stood the freedman's house to which Nero fled, and where he died.' I led them forth to a place I recognised, transfigured though it is, and bade the labourers dig. Four feet below the sod they uncovered the foundations of a villa. 'Now,' I said, 'the atrium of this house was paved with red and yellow tiles'; and in the débris, all broken and displaced, we found a score of the red and yellow tiles I remembered. The only thing that still puzzled me was that I do not look quite as I used to do. You shake your head? Well, I received my robust figure from my mother, who was a handsome contadina; and, as to my father, knowing Rome as you must, you should have little difficulty in making a shrewd guess as to his identity. Little by little, in the course of my reading, the complete past became distinct. I remembered my first love, the beautiful freedwoman Acte; I recalled the poet Lucan, the Consul Laternus, Faenius Rufus, the Prefect of the Pretorians, and Calpurnius Piso, with whom I used to sup. But I sought in vain for my golden house at the foot of the Esquiline, or for the Roman Forum, where as a youth I sat administering justice, or for the gardens of Sallust, where I loved to lie in the deep shade and dream. They existed no more than did the face of Nero in the glass; for, you understand, it was my soul only that had survived, and with it my memory. All my youth I was consumed by a passionate love of that past to which my reveries by day and my visions at night reverted. I longed for the associations of that proud life, for the frenzied shouts of the populace, for the triumphant march-past of my legions, for chariot races, and the gasp of the stricken gladiator, for the lascivious songs of the dancing girls, and for the flutes of the Athenian slaves at night."

"There was once a fire in Rome," I dryly suggested.

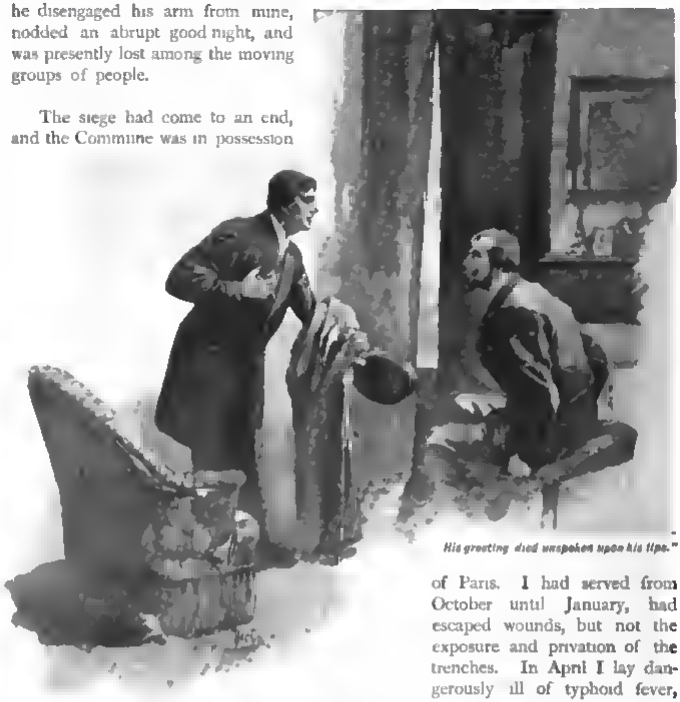
"Yes, and to this day it makes me laugh to read your modern melodramatic version of it, and to find that I am guilty of something I had no more to do with than yourself."

I had let the man run on, for he was evidently mad. "We have wandered a bit," I said, "from that delight in your long-barrelled cannon and annihilating explosives concerning which we began to speak. Are these also derived from souvenirs of the Imperial Nero?"

"There is," he answered slowly, speaking as though in mental pain, "a wild beast in many men's natures; and why should not that evil thing, with its cruelty, its base passions, its delight in wrong, haunt a soul from one life to another? If that wild beast had been let sleep and not awakened, the story of my first life would have been different. But when once a tiger has tasted blood, it is too late to tame him." Then, suddenly observing that we neared the house in which I had been lodged,

he disengaged his arm from mine, nodded an abrupt good night, and was presently lost among the moving groups of people.

The siege had come to an end, and the Commune was in possession



His greeting died unspoken upon his lips."

of Paris. I had served from October until January, had escaped wounds, but not the exposure and privation of the trenches. In April I lay dangerously ill of typhoid fever, from which by the middle of May I was convalescent. It was a time of such horrors as Paris had not known since la Barthélemy. I was lodged in the Rue de Rivoli, within sound of the firing that went on day and night, while the National troops broke into the city, and the Communards stood at bay,—almost within sight of the Colonne Vendôme when it fell, with the military supremacy of which it was the emblem. One evening Madame S—— whose *locataire* I was, came to my room in great agitation.

"Monsieur," she said, bursting into tears, I appeal to you as a man and an officer for protection."

"*Parbleu*, Madame!" I cried, "what mean these strange words?"

"Protection, not for me, who am of an age to care for myself, but for my daughter—a child of fifteen"

"Protection against whom?"

"Against an officer who has lodged here these two weeks."

"And his name?"

"Le Chevalier de Néron"

"My good woman," I cried, beside myself with rage, weak as I was, "have the kindness to take my card to Monsieur de Néron, and say I beg a few words with him immediately."

"To-night I shall see Paris in flames."

The Chevalier, whom I had by this time come to regard as my evil genius, was out at the moment, but returned an hour later to secure some papers. Upon the receipt of my message, he came bounding upstairs to my room. His greeting died unspoken upon his lips before the cold gesture with which I motioned him to a chair.

"It appears, Monsieur," I began, in a voice which I essayed to render calm, "that I am fated always to hear revolting things of you. One of the worst reached my ears an hour ago. We will not discuss it, any more than we will resume our consideration of that crazy tale you confided to me at Châlons. You understand very well what I mean, and I order you to leave this house on the instant, and not enter it again under pain of being shot like the hound that you are."

He looked at me for a moment in insolent silence. "Yes," he said at length, "I see what it is. You were a fool and a beggar when I first knew you,—now you are a fool and rich. You are living in good quarters here, which means money,

and nothing dulls the wits so much. In that, mark you, wealth differs from power, which, when it becomes supreme, ends in madness. As to the matter to which your insinuations point, recall, if you can, that Ode of Horace beginning

'Faune, Nympharum fugientum amator,'

and you will understand. Poppeia used to recite it divinely eighteen hundred years ago. The fair nymph below, who understands and believes my story, is none other than a Greek girl whom in that bygone age I loved beneath her native skies. Think you I would not know again the voluptuous imagination of my divine Euphrosyne, or that, wheresoever we meet, she could fail to follow me, even as a love-bird flies to its mate? But as for yourself, by Hercules, I have trifled with you too long. Hark? do you hear those explosions? I must be gone. I find here in Paris a sphere worthy of great deeds. It is I who all day long have been preparing the petroleuses. I saw Rome burn—to-night I shall see Paris in flames. But before I go, you shall receive from me the most excruciating death known to the ancients. With this bottle of petroleum I shall make of you a *feu d'artifice* similar to those I made of the early Christians——"

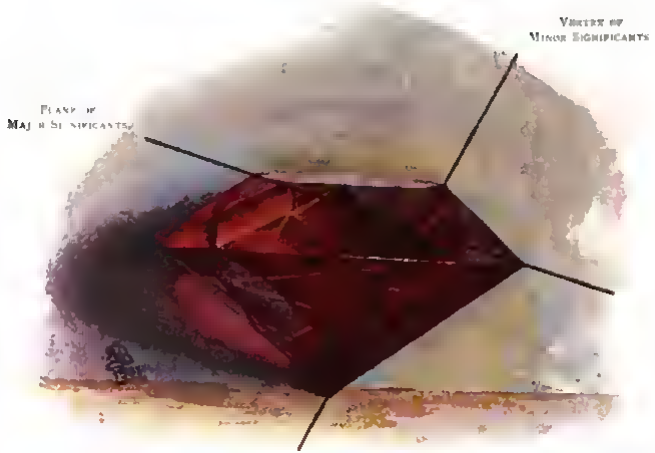
"Stay! . . . What's that?"

I had struggled to my feet, and pointed speechless to the window. Before us was the black line of the Tuileries, through whose casements the eager flames were leaping. He rushed astonished to the hall, where a corner window gave a wider view; and, springing after him, I closed and bolted the door.

That, Monsieur le Préfet, or reader, whoever you may be, is all I know of Monsieur de Néron. I am not astonished to hear to-day, after twenty-three years, that he is the ultimate Number One of the Renaissance that is to purge the world with dynamite. Nor does it surprise me, *Messieurs les policiers*, that he has slipped through your clumsy clutches. Have I an opinion about him, you ask? None whatever. I do not know whether he is more fool than knave, or whether he is more mad than many other equally eccentric people I have met in the course of a long and adventurous life.

A point that interests me is the query what I, an old and relatively helpless man, may personally expect from De Néron. His enmity I can now depend upon; and you, Monsieur le Préfet, intimate that he is at the head of a fraternity of Socialists that drawn up in single rank would encircle Paris. This fact alone is so conclusive a demonstration of the futility of nineteenth-century methods against Radicalism, that I shall not hesitate upon emergency to take the law into my own hands, as people say when they mean to break it. I do not know what Monsieur de Néron and his pals may be planning. Any night he or some of them may appear at my bedside to settle accounts with me in some such drastic fashion as would have delighted him in the fine old days he remembers. But this I know—that I sleep with an American revolver under my pillow, and that the American revolver is a weapon of great straightforwardness and clearness of purpose, or, as its Trans-Atlantic manufacturers would say in their expressive vernacular,—it means business every time!

WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.



PROFESSOR VAINI'S DREAM-STONE

THIS drawing found among Professor Vaini's papers, represents the ruby magnified to about ten times its actual size. The red lines show his calculation of the angles of refracted light within the stone. The "Southern Cross" indicated in yellow is visible only from above. The "Crest" outlined in green can be seen only at the reverse side.

"BALKAMEH"

A YEAR ago, in Paris, my attention was called to the irregular cutting of the ruby I wear as a ring. The setting had become loose, and the stone being shown to the manager of the *Maison Roque*, he examined it with a minuteness that aroused my curiosity. In answer to a question he indicated certain characteristics in the shaping and disposition of its facets which might have escaped any but the expert eye, and spoke of what he declared to be well known among master diamond-cutters—that many antique gems bear mathematically expressed in the angle and proportion and conjunction of the figures which compose their surface, a date, a name, occasionally a word of philosophical import, which, if deciphered, proves the key to some weird enigma.

"Is it possible that some such phrase exists upon the face of my ruby?" I asked incredulously.

"There are a few Asiatics," was the answer, "who to this day practise a method of writing upon jade, lapis lazuli and cornelian, whereof the outlines shaped upon this ruby seem an exceptional specimen. The fact that such geometric symbols are rarely in modern use, is no proof that they have not existed for thousands of years." Then, as though piqued by a scepticism which may have accented my query, or perhaps restrained by professional discretion, the representative of the *Maison Roque* abruptly disclaimed more than the vaguest knowledge, and busied himself with my order.

There this odd matter might have rested, had it not been that last winter at Cairo, Monsieur Mégarde, the Curator of the Ghizeh Museum, evinced so extraordinary an interest in the aspect of my ruby that, placing the ring in his hand, I remarked, "It has been thought one of the message gems that have reached us from remote ages."

He scrutinised the stone intently, and asked that it might be left for comparison with the wax impressions of all the known message gems, of which the Museum possesses a collection. He returned it the following afternoon with the announcement that a careful examination enabled him to recognise the cutting as of Phœnician workmanship. "It bears," he said, "the mystical number of seven significants. Of these, five are said to be significants in sequence, but I can only conjecture the meaning of three."

——— of Wisdom, to ———

"The first," he added, "might be King, or Chief, or Prince."

"Prince of Wisdom," I ejaculated, "is suggestive of Solomon."

Monsieur Megarde smiled at my haste as he replied, "There are two independent emblems, the upper of which, called the crest, is clearly the equivalent of Baal, and bears a resemblance to the fifth significant, which probably is some unfamiliar name beginning or ending with the Phœnician 'bal'."

"And what," I inquired, "is the seventh?"

"The seventh," he answered, "is that conjunction of facets, emblematic of the astronomical group we call the Southern Cross, which is considered by the half-dozen Europeans who understand the meaning of significants to be the essential characteristic of the dream-stones of antiquity."

"And what may dream-stones be?"

"Every one knows," answered the curator, "that gems exert upon certain persons an almost supernatural influence. Individuals of exceptional sensibility—poets, musicians, students of occult science, often women of imaginative faculty—are intensely moved and even inspired by holding a great jewel for an hour in the hand. A "dream-stone" does far more than kindle such emotions. It directs the thoughts of whoever has the receptive capacity along given lines, presenting a train of facts or ideas and transmitting thus through the ages, from mind to mind, a recital which is always the same, varying only as a piece of music may vary in the execution according to the skill or expression of different performers."

My interest was now as thoroughly aroused as it could be in a subject which seemed little less than absurd. I resolved, upon leaving Egypt, to visit Rome and place the ring in the hands of a lifelong friend, Professor Valni, whose attainments as a master of occult science are universally known. He received me with the grave kindliness of old, insisted upon my sharing his vegetarian breakfast, and scrutinised my ring in silence. It seemed superfluous to make any explanation of its supposed character, so I limited my statement to the peculiarities in its cutting, upon which I begged his opinion, and, leaving the ring, returned to my hotel.

Three days later, a note from the Professor summoned me. I was startled at the change the interval had wrought in his appearance. He looked like one who has passed through a severe illness, and suddenly aged half a dozen years.

"I have done with your ring," he began abruptly. "It had been so many centuries unused as a medium of communication that its accumulated power is almost killing. The peculiarities to which you refer are significant angles, the most accurate form of inscription known to man, in the present case easily read and to be freely rendered as follows:

THIS DREAMSTONE OF LOVE
THE PRINCE OF WISDOM TO BALKAMEH,
THE BEAUTIFUL, THE GLAD TIDINGS OF BAAL.

The Professor laid his hand thoughtfully upon a roll of manuscript. "While engaged in deciphering those significants," he said, "I took the ring to the window to calculate the angle at which the light is reflected through the stone from what are called its superior facets. Its contact exercised upon me an overmastering and not altogether agreeable effect. I feel so nervous and exhausted after the experience, that I am about to leave for Sulniaco for a week's repose. I believe the ruby gave me its 'glad tidings' very fully, and I have spent an entire day in writing out the impression or series of pictures which flashed through my mind. I know not if I were asleep or awake during the hour the reverie lasted."

I thanked the Professor, took leave of him and on reaching my apartment

read his manuscript twice with breathless interest. I publish it now, literally translated from his Italian, for the information of those few who know and love the curious arts. Having occupied two days of Professor Vaini's time, and obliged him to make a journey, I wrote him a day or two later in acknowledgment of his kindness, enclosing a cheque for ten thousand francs. I was inexpressibly shocked at receiving a reply from his secretary announcing the *savant's* death at Subiaco soon after his arrival. It was a case of collapse following upon interruption of the vital functions, as though, to use his words, "the brain had been struck by lightning."

Professor Vaini's Manuscript

In the hundredth year of the Lion in Heaven, the bird Splendour of the Morning spread his wings, and mounted with tireless flight, saying to the Magicians in the realm of Sheba, "Declare ye unto the Queen that I salute her with the words, 'O Balkameh, thou art of perfect beauty.' Moreover, ye who understand the science of the seventh power, shall bid her know that the King whom soothsayers call Prince of Wisdom, and who is a refuge alike from storm and heat, awaits her." So at the voice of the bird the magicians rose to uncover their feet, and the daughters of music were silent.

At these words the Queen rejoiced, saying, "This is the messenger I have foreseen, who hath appeared in visions, who comprehends the meaning of the mystic number, who may not be caught with a net, neither fears the snare of the fowler." Wherefore she commanded that for the space of a year, through the coasts of Mariaba, provision of horses and camels be made, and gifts collected with guards and interpreters. Whereat the land of Sheba was glad, and the dreamer weaving a garland of dreams awoke, and far away a song was heard in the night, as of them going with pipes and filled with joy.

When the caravan assembled in number as the friends of one giving gifts, she whose name is Glad Tidings of Baal, who in Ethiopia is the King's daughter of the South, the glorious land, made sacrifice, having in her hand the sceptre of the powerful one, and on her finger the signet of authority, and before her the cedar-boughs which Baalim loves.

From Hebron Balkameh beheld Jerusalem, as she had wished to see it from the south, even from the direction of the land of Sheba, its yellow rock walls rising athwart the palms. Her company likewise remembered no more the burden of their journey; and at the morning light they looked across poppy-strewn wheat-fields, which make the young men cheerful, and vines that give new wine for the maids. Before them stood Zion, its crest touched as a burnished and glistening diadem, while poised upon outspread wings floated Splendour of the Morning, musing upon the secret of the presence and the dominion of the hills of dream.

Before the gate stood the King's bodyguard of six hundred lusty young men, whose delight is in arms. Whoso looks upon them—the imperturbable—silent and motionless, with short, glistening spears, thinks with compassion of such as shall come forth against them. Wherefore Balkameh smiled, saying, "I shall remember you as the radiantly calm." But when she asked that their chief officer might speak with her, their faces were troubled; nevertheless came Ahishar the singer, who being set over the household, held in his hand the backbone of a giant. When the Queen asked, "Art thou captain over these fearless ones?" he answered, "Their captain is Methusael, who is under the King's displeasure."

Then Balkameh besought that the young men might that day be feasted from

her stores, to every one a loaf of bread, a piece of flesh, even the meat of fatlings with choice bones, and a flagon of wine, and baskets of first-ripe fruits.

All Jerusalem, even to the sons of the sorcerers, came forth, and the Queen cast silverlings by the way. First came the chief musician, and a great company making melody with mirth of tabrets, after whom followed maidens, dancing with tinkling feet. Last of all in his chariot appeared Solomon, followed by the elders, the scribes, and the prophets. He was of sunburnt complexion, with full flowing brown hair and beard, touched with a golden glow, and in his vigorous stature and strong hands and ruddy face one perceived the athlete and hunter. Yet more, as whoever considers a vineyard discerns the rich bunches of grapes, so in his meditative eye one reads the poet and lover of sun-flecked woods. He leaped to earth, coming to greet Balkameh with gracious words, for his words are full of marrow, and his sayings like wine well refined. Then, raising her dark hand to his brow, he fixed his gaze upon her, murmuring, "How sweet is the hand-touch of a beautiful stranger!"

Then she answered, "O topmost branch of the tree, may my everlasting home be near thine amid the stars." And speaking with kindling eyes and brilliant face aglow she was, as Baalim is my judge, as splendid as one of the shining ships of Tarshish. Then they stood together in the chariot and drove by the brook of the willows amid the throng of people, and were saluted by the kings of the shore and the kings of the mingled nations that dwell in the desert, till skirting the city they came to the House of Ivory in the midst of the garden, called of Eden, where formerly dwelt Pharaoh's daughter, one of the King's first wives.

Here Bathsheba advanced to receive her son's visitor. Behind her followed three men, sons of Rehob, King of Zobah, whom David took and whom he made attendants upon the women, wherefore, even now in their old age, the slaves of the palace laugh them to scorn. So when Solomon had touched Balkameh's head with the ointment of joy he withdrew, and Bathsheba conducted her through a vestibule, where against the wall was fixed the yellowing skeleton of Goliah with outstretched hands, each bent for a torch; thence entering the Queen's bedroom, they seated themselves upon the cushion-strewn floor. Between the windows, near an ivory bed, stood a table of mother of pearl with water jars and flagons, and in the midst of the room a brazier, over which, on winter evenings, Pharaoh's daughter had been wont to bend her dusky body. The ceiling whereof is inlaid with the words:

"*The sword for men, the lute for women, the pen for slaves*"

Bathsheba's glory hath faded since David beheld her upon Uriah's roof. Fat from gross eating, wrinkled for want of love, reduced by sloth to the care of parrots—for her the rainbow lieth in the retrospect. In her age she hath returned to the gods of her youth, Berith, whose temple is at Shechem, Chemosh, and the gods of Hamath, Arphad, and Sepharvaim, and she paints her body with gaudy stripes as often as she dances before their altars in the groves.

Through an aroma of burning spice Balkameh asked, "Tell me, composer of songs, who was the man led in chains by the gate?" Whereat Bathsheba replied, "Sister, that is Methusael, captain of the body-guard, sentenced to be sawn asunder, and led thus collar-bound before his fellows that he may taste his fate to the bone."

From room to room they walked, beholding the gifts of Pharaoh, of Hiram King of Tyre, and of the lords of Cyprus, till from the roof they gazed upon pastures with bubbling springs as pure as the wells of Salvation, and marked

"Coming to greet Sakhmeh with gracious words"

the sunshine where the humming-birds flit, and the shade where the woodpecker taps on the tree

The following morning came Abishag, the King's favourite wife, whom Solomon loveth as the signet upon his hand, resting not in his love but making great joy over her with voluptuous songs Who having been brought when a girl to David's death-bed, remained in the palace when David was no more. In which days, when Solomon was ever inditing, she came to his closet, and casting aside her vestment, crept stealthily upon him, and laying a hand upon the scroll looked laughing in his eyes, whispering, "The knowledge of a woman, O Son of the Sun, is better than the wisdom of a man or than the promises of prophets." Wherefore because she was clean-limbed and magnificently poised, gave he her fair raiment with jewels of price and dream gowns curiously woven to wear at night, and dyed attire and badger-skin shoes to wear by day. She also was a lover of groves, sacrificing in gardens and burning incense upon altars, so that in high places the name of Baalim was upon her lips.

Then spake the Queen. "Tell me, Lily of speech, why heard I through the night, and in the morning when the watchmen sang at sight of the break of day, the sobbing of one that has drunk of the cup of trembling?"

Whereto Abishag answered, "Bride whom the Gods desire, it is Adalia, a Bactrian, whom the King hath set here as a nail in a sure place." And with swift gesture she added, "I will strip her out of her clothes, and after her cheek-teeth are drawn, she shall be bound to a chariot-wheel with her feet in the ground, the wheel whereof shall be turned, and her body wrenched askew."

"Why is she set as a nail in a sure place?" murmured Balkameh.

While they were served with salted locusts and stuffed fish, Abishag wiped her lips, answering, "O subtle charmer of men, be it likewise given thee to snare the dragon and the unicorn. Know that this Bactrian was to wed Methusael, the captain of the guard, who lies in a dungeon where his skin cleaveth to the bone for scorpions. And because Adalia is stiff-necked and would not bow before the wishes of the King, neither listen to the voice of the interpreter, she hath been made like a young tree in the drought"

That day, when they came into the city of David, the King met them before the Temple Beside him was Pharaoh's daughter, of lean, implacable face, her shaven head being covered with a wig Whose voice is cold as the splash of a bucket when it falls in the well, neither takes she heed of aught save at a prospect of war, the thought whereof rejoices her. Near by stood also Gumi, the Ethiopian, who draws the bow like a man and bestrides a horse like an Arab. Her delight is to paint her body ring-streaked, and to sit watching in the fire the shapes that come and go. Likewise, she observeth times and useth enchantments, knowing both male and female night monsters. Whose gods are Misroch, god of the Assyrians, Dagon the fish god, and Milcom whom the Hebrews call the abomination of Moab, but the greatest of all she declares to be Moloch. So the virgins that came with Pharaoh's daughter snuffed at Gumi because her hair curls crisp, and Bathsheba sprinkled her, whereat Gumi was wroth and hissed.

Balkameh beheld Millo, the house called the forest of Lebanon, the holy house and the sanctuary of strength, over which silver lay like dust. She saw also Solomon's wives, of whom not one hath her deep-set eyes and clear-cut face, and her bosom veiled with a veil They passed before the molten sea and the flowers of lilies, till, beholding the burnt-offerings, the Queen gave to the priests a silver spit whereon to roast an ox Likewise cast she into the chest wherein are cast the trespass money and the sin money which are the priests'.

And seeing the throng of prophets watching the great pot filled with seethe-pottage, she scattered drops of ointment upon the throne, breathing in silence a prayer to Baal, that her heart's desire be granted. Where also in the place of presentation of gifts she offered to Solomon gifts of Ophir gold, and they passed together into the inner court where is no noise, nor strident word, nor lamentation, but only a twittering of birds, like a voice of mirthful gladness, as it were the voice of the bridegroom and the bride.

But one of the prophets that watched the heaping-up of treasure, lifted his hands, saying: "The house that ye fill shall become an habitation of beasts, and the kings of Judæa shall be as wandering birds cast out of the nest. Verily Millo shall be full of doleful creatures, and in the Gate Beautiful shall satyrs dance. And as for the queens of the ends of the earth, that pray to winged spirits that their hearts' desire be granted, they shall be drunk with the sweet wine and strange water forbidden to prophets."

Then answered Solomon, his face red with wrath, "Shall a Prophet live for ever, and doth not Scripture declare that a presumptuous Prophet shall die? Thou art no better than one that would plunder the tomb of a king. Of a truth I will roll thee in the dust, making thee a gazing-stock, and a hook shall be put in thy nose and thou shalt be wiped as a serving-man wipeth a dish, turning it upside down."

Now this Prophet is the brother of Methusael.

So Balkameh returned to the House of Ivory to bathe in a cool tank in the midst of the garden of Eden. Here, in bygone days, in the midst of the seclusion she loved, came Pharaoh's daughter to listen to the musical inspiration of fountains by day, and read the message of the stars at night. Amid orange blossoms and wine-red oleanders, the trickling water touches the air with its whisper. Beneath clustering cypresses is a rock, where at noontide the sunshine spreads the moss with brilliance. A trellised way, heaped with roses, leads to the summer-house within whose roof is painted the Zodiac. Near by, for a jest, Pharaoh's daughter caused to be graven by her Egyptian graver on a fragment of wall little seen, the figure of Rameses holding the Hebrews in bondage by the hair of their head. Before whom also she set an image of Hathor, the giver of joy, with hands overflowing with amaranths, that when goddesses and kings' daughters meet, her hands may still be filled with the bloom of immortal days.

When Sheba went to salute the Prince of Wisdom in his house, they left the multitude in the court and ascended to the roof, whence the eye ranges to the almond grove by the pool of Siloam, where the daughters of pleasure dance. And Solomon laughed, saying: "Are not the side-lights often the happiest views? — from here David beheld Bathsheba!"

But she murmured, "Who can guess how far my fancy may stray, though I but walk to the nearest village? And because Baal hath granted me a corner-stone of knowledge have I learned to keep close to the simple things of life, be they no profounder than the reflection of a star."

As she spoke, she started away from the wall, stumbling over a basket of scrolls which was the King's business for the day; for fluttering before her in the breeze hung the skin of a man of stature, slain by David's son Jonathan, who in life had on each hand six fingers and on each foot six toes. Nevertheless the King bade her be seated, saying: "Let us dedicate an hour to calm," pointing as he spoke to the sky where, weaving its circling flight, floated the Hoopoo of the crimson wings, which dwells at the foot of the rainbow.

Then Balkameh blushed, for she is one to whom Splendour of the Morning hath spoken, saying: "For thee an adorable lover lingers in the darkness, in the depth of the garden, standing motionless and expectant as a phantom of the night!"

Her gaze rested upon a sundial, a figure of bronze with uplifted hands, the hand of Time and the hand of Destiny, the shadows whereof mark the lapse of day. Which was made by a Phœnician in the youthful semblance of Abishag when she cast aside her vestment to stand before the King. But Balkameh was jealous, because Abishag is beautiful, wherefore as Solomon turned aside she spat in the figure's face.

Then the King, seating himself near her, said: "I too love simple facts, nor am I content till I have tried to sound them as it were with line and plummet, even were they unfathomable as a ripple of the sea."

To which the Queen answered, "How shall we fare with our handcuffed hands and blinded eyes, if the wine of life become mixed with bitter water? Is anything really old, or wholly new?"

Whereat Solomon laughed, saying, "There are things which be old, yet always new—the lore of Egypt, which takes note of the flight of a bird; or where the river is deep knows what lies beneath the wave; or that enchanted circle, older than the Pyramids, at which wizards peep and mutter, wherein the earliest Pharaohs read the wisdom of superb repose."

After they had discoursed of many things, Balkameh asked, "Is a king a breeder of nettles in the way of a friend that seeketh a gift, or shall the door of hope be closed upon one whose heart is breaking?"

Then Solomon replied: "In every palace there be thieves waiting to penetrate the gold-worker's chamber. Nevertheless, say on."

The Queen continued: "There is a damsel called Adalia, to whom, if leave be granted, I will speak a word in season, bidding her hearken with her ears, that she may live and not die; and to me, if to none other, will she hearken, for her god is Baal-zebah. But first she and Methusael shall be set free to dwell at the House of Ivory, subject to my command."

Whereto the King answered: "O voice persuasive as the murmuring deep, be it done according to thy desire."

On the following day when they sat at meat, loaves and cracknels were set before them, and antelope collops roasted upon coals, with quails, partridges, and fowls of the air. Likewise, to each table an osier basket heaped with grapes and lumps of figs and strings of pomegranates, and a cruse of honey fresh from the comb. Then Solomon said: "Shall not the house give gifts to its lord? Call therefore the chief musician, that we may drink wine with a song."

So it was a day of feasting with laughter and clapping of hands. When the cupbearer had tasted, they drank to the lees, and no man's cup was empty, neither were the wine-cups suffered to stand full. The chief musician also drew from his dulcimer a haunting melody so deftly touched that each reverberant string gave back the meaning of his spoken word as he told of the enchanted groves where the singing of unseen damsels is heard, even of them that sing for joy of heart when kings come to glory in the sun's rising. Whereat Balkameh looked towards the King with a yellow light kindling her black eyes; but Bathsheba sat cold and silent, raking over the ashes of her youth.

Of a sudden the King cried, "Bring hither Adalia." Then, when she was set

"She was the type of that race of dancers and musicians for whom the stars delight to shine"

in their midst, he said: "Is not new wine found in the clustre, and shall she not dance?"

But Adaha answered, "Great King, they that descend into the pit cannot hope for truth; must I therefore go all my years in the bitterness of my soul?"

Yet, though her words were soft, one could read in her blanched face that her heart was as adamant. Nevertheless, her head was faint, and her eyes overflowing with anguish. Then, forasmuch as she would not dance, the young men took her away, mocking, to thrust her head downward in a wine-butt.

Now Sheba whispered to the King: "Are lilies gathered with a scythe, or do men make love with an axe? Surely a maiden will not confess before this throng, but to me hath she hearkened with her ears. By Lucifer, she is more pleasant than a garden of cucumbers. She but feared a king's love might pass as the early dew. This night, in the Garden of Eden, when stars climb in the sky, she shall wait in the dark, in the midst of the clustre of palms, and by her tinkling silver bells and the balsam with which she anoints herself shall she be known."

The King drank till he beheld the hollow of his golden cup ere, smiling, he said: "Who wants a grander tent than the dome of the starlit sky?" And after a thoughtful pause he added, "Hath not the Hoopoo said, *The wise man findeth his love in the dark*"? Moreover, of his choicest treasure, even of the uncut gems that he wore, gave he Balkameh a ruby which had never been graved by the graver's tool, saying—as a demon laughed and murmured in his ear—"Take this red drop of my blood for a token that thou shalt have thy heart's desire."

Then Sheba rose, and having cast aside her dream-gown of embroidered linen, stood before him, glistening in the torchlight, as one about to dance before the altar. And her waving hands and quivering finger-tips were like hovering butterflies. So as she danced barefoot up and down the alabaster pavement, her splendid body fine as the dash of spray that leaps where the salt wave strikes, they that looked were hushed, save for the sackbuts that filled the air with piping like the thrill of nightingales at night, till the soul of the listener whispered within him. And the Queen was as a proud standard-bearer that fainteth not, neither is trodden down. She seemed also an incarnation of the voluptuous South—a sinuous, pearl-girdled semblance of its suave and stately palms—a vision of tropic birds and fleet-winged sails touched by an after-sunset glow. More than all, she was the type of that race of dancers and musicians for whom the stars delight to shine. Whoso beheld her knew that this is the breeze-blown dance wherein the maidens of Babylon exult in the groves of betrothal, as the dance of them that prepare for the nuptials they desire. Wherefore in her swaying Balkameh interpreted the mystical meaning of the amorous shafts with which at his rising and setting the Sun-god pierces the depth of his groves, or the reflection, as of gems bestowed by a lover, which at Tyre he lifts from the sea upon the sun-browned wall of his house.

When the Queen, having made an end, put on again her dream-gown, a silence fell, like the hush that follows when the rhythm and emotion of prayer moisten the eyes. Till, as though touched by the hand of a listening god, a harpstring broke, whereby as she took her leave and the air resounded with the acclaim of many voices, we knew that a fateful instant had passed. So Sheba returned to the Ivory House, in whose garden the King that night waited and watched, silent as break of day, while stars climbed in the sky, till in the midst of the clustre of palms he became aware that a woman stood in the darkness, and by the tinkling silver bells and the fragrance of oleander balsam he knew that it was Adaha.

When the days of the Queen's sojourn were fulfilled, she stood with her company before the King at the oak of weeping. And she interrupted the long salutation of the prophets, and, turning to the Pearl of Wisdom, said, "Let our farewell be brief. When lengthening shadows slant through the Garden of Eden—forget not Adalia. In the deepest copse of Manaba, in the midst of overleaning palms, will I build a Bower of Remembrance, where on starlit evenings, after

"Farewell. But to me all the days of my life, whatever I see that is beautiful shall speak to me with thy voice."

good-night or at break of day, before the bidding of good-morning the footsteps of thrilling memories shall rustle the leaves. Are there not things best understood in the darkness, and hath not the Hoopoo declared, *A woman shall compass a man*? Verily a woman's wit is no ill match for Solomon's wisdom. There be three wonderful riddles: the flight of a bird in the air, the course of a ship in the sea, and the way of a man with a maid. Now this was the way of a queen with a king—and this also, my adorable lover, thou comprehendest not. Farewell.

But to me, all the days of my life, whatever I see that is beautiful shall speak to me with thy voice. Yea, hereafter shall I care little for the blended meaning of the stars, if but a single point of radiance beckons me to thee."

The long caravan wound down the hills, till looking back, Balkameh beheld the Temple sparkling in the sunset as a flame of triumph.

Then went the King into an high place, and with him were Jehosaphat, the recorder, and Benaiah, chief of the host. Thence his eyes followed the caravan till through the pink haze it faded and was lost in violet darks. But they that were near understood not why he laughed, murmuring "to think I knew not! As though one could take from a woman her heart's delight, mocking her borrowed balsam and her ankles bound with another's silver bells! Is not a tiger-lily more splendid than an amaranth—albeit both be fair? The wise man is he who knows enough not to know too much, and this, subtle maker of riddles, is the way of a King with a Queen."

It was an afternoon when mere consciousness of life brought perfect peace. Time's tender touch mellowed the battlements with russet that flushed or darkened between sunshine and shade. Sweet scent of perfumed gardens bore pulses that thrilled like a thought of fair women. The mountains veiled with opalescent hues the secret of their solitude sublime. Beyond them a cloud caught the fugitive sparkle of day, seeming a last fading glimpse of the bird that for ever had flown—the splendour and joy of the morning. But to this hour no man can tell aught of Methusael or Adalia, nor into what land they went when they fled from the House of Ivory.

This singular narrative speaks with a precision in marked contrast to the looseness and verbiage of Oriental recitals, whether ancient or modern. Its statements are not at variance with historical fact, so far as known. Had it been deciphered from a papyrus, its intimate details would suggest that it might have been written by one in attendance upon the Queen. It alludes to Balkameh as still living, and to the events it records as having recently transpired. It is noticeable that at that remote period the things of Egypt were a measure of antiquity. The reference to the Temple as an edifice just completed points approximately to the year 985 B.C. Curious to remark, there are in it several slight inaccuracies such as a transient visitor, unfamiliar with the country, might make. Far more startling is the extraordinary intimation that Abishag was Solomon's first and favourite wife, and that the amorous phrases of his Song are an impassioned memorial of their love.

Professor Vaini's manuscript led me to the study of Phœnician civilisation and enterprise. In Solomon's time the South Arabian kingdom of Saba or Sabæa, or Sheba, now known as Arabia Felix, controlled the East African coast, and its colonists had not only occupied Abyssinia, but had penetrated as far as the gold mines of Mashona. The Somali district was known to ancient Egypt as the Land of Punt. Portuguese explorers of the Massapa mines note the resemblance between the native name "Afur" and the Biblical "Ophir." It was from here that Balkameh obtained her gold, of which, if the Jewish gold talent is rightly calculated at £5475, her gift to Solomon must have amounted to over £600,000. The language and writing of Abyssinia indicate that it was peopled from South Arabia at a period of remote antiquity. Following upon this trace, the French

explorer Arnaud discovered towards the middle of the nineteenth century the ruined walls and Temple of Mariaba, the royal city of Sheba, and obtained inscriptions of Phœnician derivation.

An element of uncertainty will always attach to the Abyssinian tradition that the Royal family of that kingdom, whereof Menelik is the present representative, descends from a son of the Queen of Sheba. I have asked the opinion of Egyptologists, of Oriental scholars, and of eminent churchmen as to the existence of this child, and while the consensus of opinion rests upon inferential conclusions, there is in the surmise which attributes its paternity to Solomon nothing conflicting with our knowledge of the Prince of Wisdom.

I have frequently sought the confidence of the dream-stone by holding it for hours in meditative silence, but necessarily in vain. It is obviously unlikely that an unimaginative man of affairs could attune himself to mysteries so subtle and elusive. More than once I have invited a repetition of Professor Vaini's observations by offering to submit my ruby to the experiments of acquaintances whose sensitive mood might render them receptive subjects. On such occasions it has seemed an evident duty to mention the tragic fate of my Italian friend, to whom the "glad tidings of Baal" were as lightning. Then, to my chagrin, the listener's flashing interest invariably fades, and the dream-stone of Balkameh's love, which her lips may have touched and inspired—remains silent.

WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.

"The young men took her away, mocking to thrust her head downward in a wine-butt.